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NG PUBLICATION

TOO LATE FOR ETERNITY

by Bryce Walton

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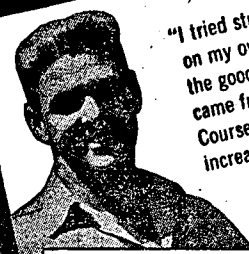
not at all, scientists say



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STARTLING stories

Combined with THRILLING WONDER STORIES and FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE

Vol. 33, No. 1 A THRILLING PUBLICATION SPRING, 1955

A Complete Novel

TOO LATE FOR ETERNITY . . . . . Bryce Walton 10

How long did women live? Old Joad was dying to find out, and wanted his wife to have the very best of everything!

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NANNY . . . . . Philip K. Dick 50

The robot was the best nurse that the children ever had

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"They may consider me an idiot — but the voices are real"

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It was a case of beauty and the beast. Which was which?

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This was the problem — how can you break the unbreakable?

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Cover Painting by EMSH Illustrates "Too Late For Eternity"

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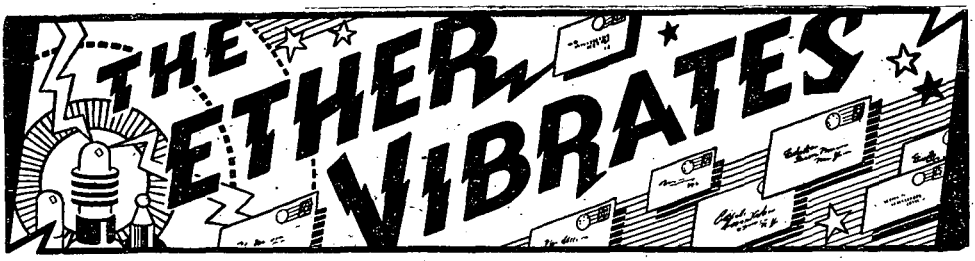

A Science Fiction Department Featuring Letters From Readers

OUR cover this month has told you that *Startling Stories* is now combined with *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Fantastic Story Magazine*. By putting all three magazines in one, we hope to give you the best elements of each—in fine writing, exciting stories, and fresh ideas.

This issue contains a story or two originally planned for *Thrilling Wonder*, plus other stories distinctly written for *Startling*. As for *FSM*, we don't have any reprints in the current issue. But if there's sufficient demand, we may revive the *Hall of Fame* feature which ran for many years in *Startling* before *FSM* was created.

By concentrating our forces on a single magazine, we expect to give you a superior selection of stories—in addition to the readers' column and other features we've always had. It's an experiment, of course, and we'll be on the lookout for your reactions.

The Weaker Sex?

The featured story in this issue, TOO LATE FOR ETERNITY, is based on facts available to anyone. The statistics are as near at hand as the daily newspaper or the public library.

Women outnumber men by a noticeable margin, a margin getting wider all the time. A woman's life expectancy is now seven years longer than that of men in her own age group. It's evidence of a change, a big change which is taking place right in front of our eyes.

And there's more. A newspaper item quotes Sir Adolphe Abrahams, president of the British Association of Medicine, as saying: "Women's biological superiority is unquestioned . . . She is less susceptible to malignant growth, and the incidence of other diseases and disabilities, in women, is remarkably lower than in men. Her moral courage is generally superior.

"Women rarely get delirium tremens, and males predominate as deaf mutes, idiots, and cranks. Nearly all malformations except cleft palate are more common in men, who also have twenty times as much color blindness as women. When it comes to mass murder, the male sex cannot hold a pinch of arsenic to such poisoners as the Marquise de Brinvilliers who slew hundreds, or Mary Ann Cotton of Britain who poisoned her mother, her lodgers, three husbands, and fifteen children."

And where does all this take us? For one answer, you can read Bryce Walton's *Too Late For Eternity* beginning on p. 10. The author harbors no hard feelings, of course. He's merely looking Mother Nature in the face.

Clevention

Fans in Cleveland are already at work on preparations for the next world science fiction convention. They're planning to make it the biggest one ever and will welcome convention members whether they come by rail, rocket, or jet-propelled bicycle. It will be the thirteenth world convention and will take place September 2, 3, 4, and 5 (the Labor Day Weekend). For membership, send $2.00 to Noreen Kane Falasca, Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland 7, Ohio.

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(Continued on page 8)

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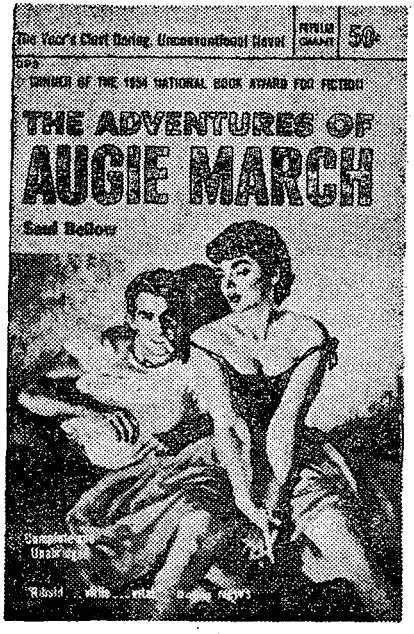

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ETHERGRAMS

ANOTHER ANSWER TO CRITICS

by Dr. Gotthard Gunther

Dear Editor: It seems there is no end to the indignation my articles have provoked among *Startling Stories* readers. Now it is Mr. Richard H. Stott who believes to have all the answers. Everybody else is a "lunkhead." First he insists that "simple reversal of charges in sub-atomic particles is . . . not enough to reverse the subject's viewpoint." As to that I repeat *again* (cf. my letter in the winter issue of Startling, p.6) that seetee matter does not reverse the subject's viewpoint. Mr. Stott—like all my other critics—misses the very point of the problem. Both parties, the terrene as well as the contra-terrene, entertain exactly the same viewpoint of the Universe. But this sameness cannot be communicated across the gulf that separates our form of physical reality from the one of the seetee world. Communication, therefore, has to go through a thought-translator.

Mr. R. J. Olcott from Chicago (2250 West 112th Street) makes exactly the same mistake. He writes (in a letter not printed in *Startling*): "I contend that it makes no difference whether the intelligence is terrene or c/t. The human race has seen fit to assign to a certain type of charge the positive (yes) designation and negative (no) to the other . . . A 'terrene' life-form could assign exactly the opposite interpretation the same charges, and a c/t life-form could assign 'terrene' values to the charges that some terrene-substance form might give 'c/t' values." Of course it makes no difference for each party which values are assigned in one's own world. So far you are quite right, Mr. Olcott. But it is exactly this arbitrariness in assigning values which plays havoc with the *communication* between us and the seetee mind. What is always overlooked is that the reversal of the positive/negative charge of *Matter* is not paralleled by an equivalent reversal of "yes" and "no" in *Meaning!* The positive/negative charge of energy represents a simple interchange relation like "left" and "right". A man in the USA has the Atlantic Ocean on his right hand when he faces Canada and on his left hand facing Mexico. Both geographic statements are exactly equivalent, and the reversal of "left" and "right" doesn't mean a thing. All my critics point out rightly that the reversal of the positive/negative charge is in exactly the same category. This is absolutely right. But the trouble is that the positive/negative value of *meaning* in communication reverses in a much more complicated pattern. The following table may illustrate the situation:

Matter: positive/negative
Meaning: positive/partially negative (1)
positive/totally negative (2)
partially negative/totally negative (3)

My critics assume—being rather unfamiliar with the logical theory of negation—that if the positive/negative energy charges of matter are reversed the meaning of a thought remains the same because our mind contains an equally reversible system of positive and negative statements. Consequently nothing is changed, and the whole idea of a seetee mind is much ado about nothing. This is where they are wrong. The mind (meaning) has three interchange relations (1), (2) and (3) and we do not know which of the three corresponds exactly to the reversal of physical charges of energy in a seetee world.

In order to establish direct communication with us (without a thought-translator) the seetee people would first have to send us a signal conveying the information which of the three reversals of meaning is valid. We do not know it beforehand. But as they think exactly the way we think they do not know it either. However, I shall be generous and assume that they have obtained the necessary knowledge . . . by dint of some supernatural miracle. All right, they send the necessary information. But that wouldn't help us either. Because in order to decipher their signal we would have to know the very code which the signal intends to convey to us. There simply is no way of direct communication.

There is, however, a deeper aspect to the whole problem, and Mr. Stott has touched it lightly in his letter. Let me quote: "Dr. Gunther, you don't want positrons and antiprotons . . . you want something which is anti-matter. If one thinks a bit he will come to the conclusion that the only thing anti-matter in the entire universe is space . . . the true c/t 'matter' would have its electrons and nuclei consisting of absolutely nothing sitting in an electrically charged 'space.'" You have something there, Mr. Stott. But I must say you did not read my first article very carefully.

I made it quite clear from the outset (Spring issue, p.96) that I was concerned with the problem of *communication* with a seetee mind. And with the problem of existence only so far as the issue of communication was concerned. But I admit there is an even deeper issue: namely, is it possible to recognize the seetee mind as existent in the strict ontological sense? Or, can we communicate with a mind we do not recognize as existent? I have hinted at the stand I take in this case on page 101 (Spring 1954 issue). There I point out that the contra-Arisfotelian mind is a total negation of ours. And then I continue: "Total negation is that which not only negates all the contents of a certain mind but

(Continued on Page 109)

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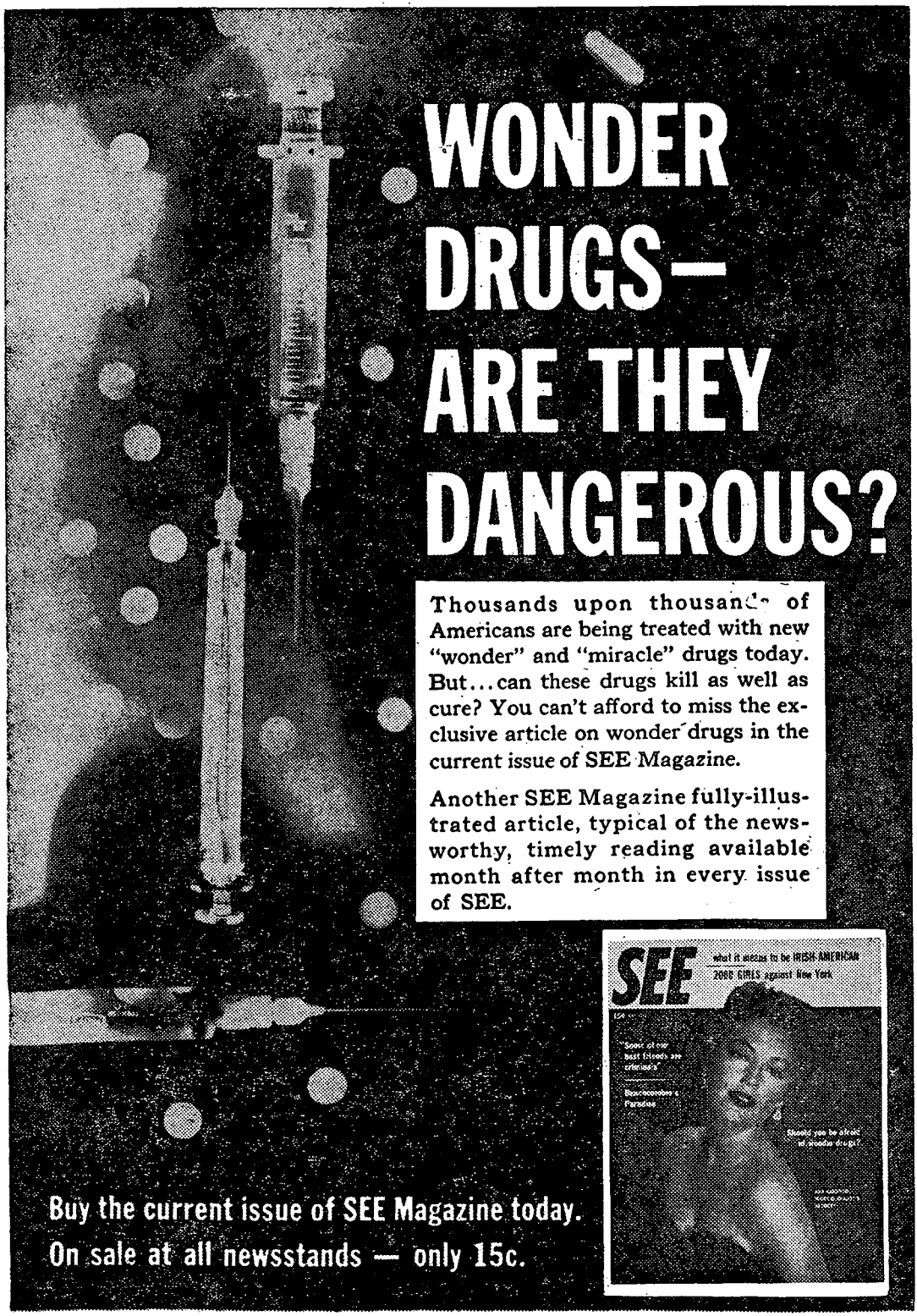
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TOO LATE

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FOR ETERNITY

A Novel by BRYCE WALTON

I

The Old Man

THAT night, a little after ten, Henry Joad went out for a walk. Fall's brisk wind buffeted his head. It pulled at his feet and the dry leaves fingered his shoes. It was a brave man, he thought, who would walk in such a wind, wearing a toupee without a hat.

The light from the front porch of his country house fled back into the dark. Henry stood for a long time there in the moonlight. The ground slanted down into the darkness of a gully. He could hear water sighing over stones as though running from the ice of winter. Denuded trees and Henry's stooped figure made similar silhouettes against the autumn sky above the hill.

The walk had brought color to his face, driving away the

How long did women live? Old Joad was dying to find out. . . .

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He wanted his young wife to have the best of

former waxy look of complete fatigue. But the fear; he hadn't left that behind.

Fear always came to him this time of year. Through winter he forgot it completely. And then the apprehension began with Spring. By late summer he could hear the death rattle of October.

He kept on standing there as though afraid to move, aware of the shallowness of his breath and the loneliness of the night among the skeletal trees, feeling the dryness of his bones.

Jeanette. Suddenly he needed his wife. He thought of her warm body, soft and waiting in the Snug-L cover. She had everything he needed now, health, youth, energy. He had never felt such a violent need for her before.

He imagined Jeanette's breasts pressed against his cheek. He remembered the living smell of her skin.

He ran. He forgot his heart which had acted up again rather badly last week. He ran, slipping and sliding. He blundered into a tree. He ran faster.

He was gasping and the cold bit viciously at his lungs as he reached the rock wall of the patio. He went through, and leaned against the icy rock to catch his breath.

Joy, anticipation was a warmth in him then as he saw the soft candle light in Jeanette's bedroom, shining its gentle fingers to him through the French windows.

That was the candle she always burned when she wanted him.

She wanted him tonight. Oh God, Jeanette, wanting him. It had been a long time since she had burned the candle in the window.

He was walking almost stealthily, carefully, as though afraid the candle light would go out. The empty swimming pool blinked, and dry leaves swirled at the bottom of it.

He slipped along the wall until he was almost to the window. And then he heard Jeanette's whispering laughter.

And then a man's voice said: "But why did you pick me?"

"Oh, don't be silly, Larry. Don't pretend—"

"I mean it. Why me? I never really thought—"

"You know you're young and handsome and sure for a quick advancement, and anyway, Joady recommended you. I've learned to take old Joady Bear's advice. He said that when the time came, you would be my best bet."

Henry heard the long pause, and then a long sigh.

"— and you are, Larry. Oh, you are!"

The candle went out.

HENRY could hear the dry leaves swirling round and round in the concrete grave of the empty pool, the feeble stirrings and beatings of the dead refuse of eager spring and dead summer.

Boneless and nerveless, Henry sank against the side of the house. Then he moved, carefully at first so as not to make any noise, sliding along the wall, shivering and feeling the cold blowing empty spaces through him, and then he ran around the house and in through the front door, stumbling blindly through the darkness and a numbing cloud of sickness.

He felt without body as he lay down on his bed. He seemed only a mass of cloudy feeling.

He lay there shivering like something raw and bleeding. He wanted to cry. He wanted to scream. But they would hear him and they would know. He had some dignity left, somewhere surely, inside of him. Some self-respect.

He lay there a long time trying to think about it, clarify it, calm himself, be realistic. But he could only feel about it.

His pride came fierce and hard, stiffening his limbs. Then the wave of fear and loneliness, the sudden awareness that he was alone and old. Put aside at last. Finally replaced.

It was true, he had recommended Larry Johnson.

It was true, a man got old and had to

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be replaced by a younger and more vigorous mate.

True, all true. But until tonight somehow it had been something that would never happen to him, something he never dared to think about much. Something he had pushed down, rationalized, tried to ignore. Like death.

When he got up and shuffled into the bathroom to get a sedative, he seemed boneless, his body shambling like an old man's. *Like an old man's,* he thought. Oh, he had thought about it plenty of times before. Sometimes he had even got-

ten very mad thinking about himself having to get old and finally die, and be replaced by a young man, and his wife and the other women all staying young and beautiful and full of eager life. Several times he had wanted to protest against what had seemed a rank injustice. But each time there was this fear, a visit to the Psychemother soothed things and made him calm again.

Grateful for his young beautiful wife. Proud of her. Dependant on her. She had made him feel younger, and through her he had staved off the inevitable image of old age and death. A man will put up with injustice, the most terrible kind of injustice, if he's afraid to change it, afraid that things could be even worse. Tradition was a hard thing to question.

But now, facing it, against the wall, looking the bitter end directly in its grinning face, he was shaken. Frightened by his own sudden, unleashed hatred for the way things were.

He couldn't sleep.

He got up and stood near the window. God, where was he now? Where could he live now? The fear flooded in all around, covering him with sweat. He was afraid of his own inability, his uselessness, loneliness. Afraid of himself, of Jeanette, of her opinion of him. And Larry—his best friend, one of the younger executives at the office—afraid of Larry too because of his young handsomeness.

Jeanette and Larry in there in the dark, whispering together—

He sank down onto the floor by the window. In memory he touched the slender casement of her breast. The skin with its warmth and softness, his hands gliding over the curvature of her hips, gripping the narrow waist, feeling her intensely wanting breath against his hands.

He began to sob, holding his hand over his lips, choking on his own defeat.

A YOUNG smiling man with blond hair, moving lithely, eagerly, danced across the room. It wasn't Larry. It was a ghost. It was Henry Joad, a long, long time ago. Sure, he remembered. He'd remembered many times when he had been young. But it was getting harder to remember because it was so long ago.

Henry lay there and tried to think about it, tried to get things clear, calm himself with the kind of resignation that would enable him to stand the shock of replacement.

Henry was now 125 years old, going on 126. The retirement age, meaning he had maybe another five years to go—if he were lucky. Retirement wasn't a lengthy loneliness any more as he understood it had once been centuries before. You could work now almost right up to the door of the crematorium. You were, in fact, expected to do so.

The women expected it.

With his bad ticker, Henry didn't feel lucky.

He had married at twenty.

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He rubbed his eyes as though he were sleepy. He'd been married to Jeanette 105 years! Foggily, his brain probed through layers of dust, cobwebs, old walls and dead gardens. And vaguely, almost like a faceless shadow, he could dimly remember the old man he had replaced in Jeanette's life. The shadow had never been very real, but it was real now. Horribly real.

Longevity. Since the nineteenth century, life expectancy had steadily increased. And from the start, women's life expectancy had been greater than men's.

A long time back, Henry had been very curious about why women should live so much longer than men, so much longer that a man could grow old and die in the service of a woman, and be replaced by a younger man, and the woman still looking and acting as young as ever.

He had looked into it, filled with a timid but persistent protest.

Back sometime, he couldn't remember what year, but sometime in the twentieth century a woman's life expectancy was seven years greater, on the average, than a man's. The discrepancy had increased with alarming steadiness after that. It had been a cause for much alarm, particularly on the part of men. They had studied it, tried to figure out the reason for it.

Heart trouble. High blood pressure. It increased among men, declined among women. Extreme forms of damaging psychosis increased for men, dwindled among women.

It had all boiled down to what seemed to have been a simple evolutionary fact. Women were just more rugged, more endurable, tougher than men.

But why?

And then the third World War. Records, statistics destroyed. A lot of men destroyed too. And after that, three women for every man.

Matriarchy. The women had taken over. And a lot of those women hated men and hated science. Some of them formed anti-male cults. Who needs men?

They took over everything, Joad thought, lying there with his face pressed against the floor. Everything. They got everything. The women inherited all the money, all the property and power.

And that last war—maybe that had done something incalculably bad and final to men, to their souls as well as their hearts.

LONELINESS, that was the hardest thing to take now, now at the end of the road. If only he had his kids here, he thought vaguely, and the unorthodoxy of his thought frightened him even more.

That was the way things were. The women had taken over. The kids too. Practically everything. He remembered being raised in a Child Care Clinic somewhere out in Vermont. Not very well, but he remembered it now. Raised by women, processed, indoctrinated in all the ways to be a good husband and provider and lover. Taught how to take care of women, and make them even happier than they already seemed to be.

And when he was eager and young and virile being sent out so the women could look him over. And he remembered now the old man he had replaced in Jeanette's scheme of things 105 years ago. An old man bowing out and dying slowly away in the corner, in the shadows. But then, Henry had been too young and eager and well-conditioned to care.

But he cared now. Now that it seemed somehow too late even to care, he cared.

When a man grew old, way back in a different time, he had had his children. His flesh and blood, going on. A kind of immortality of the species and the spirit that made one's own death easier.

But he didn't even have that now. His own kids had been born somewhere and raised in a Processing School somewhere. He had never seen them, and Jeanette had never mentioned them.

That was the women's world.

His children taken away. Youth, love taken away. His life taken away. It had been that way a long time, but suddenly now he hated it with a frightening intensity. He hated *them*. He hated the

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way things were. He hated his own impotence and the need for resignation.

He had never dared really think about it much before, and when he had questioned it, or even tried to protest, the Psychemothers had placated him, made him realize that this was the way things were. Made him realize the uselessness of fighting against the inevitable. Made him again grateful for what he had.

But he had nothing left now. Maybe a few more years, if he were lucky. He wanted to rise up, scream out, fight back at whatever it was.

And then the fatigue flowed over him. And the October moonlight lay white and cold over Henry Joad's face. He went to sleep thinking, I woke up too late.

III

Smile and Look Alive

HE LAY looking out the window into early dawn. He watched the dead leaves dancing unashamedly away on the drift of the season. They knew when it was time to go. They didn't care. He cared. That was his misfortune. He cared too much now.

He groped, found his dentures, sucked them against his gums. The molars snapped together. He felt a little better, a bit more substantial. He had had very bad dreams last night. They had left some kind of raw strangeness in him that was frightening. Last night had ripped something, torn him out of place. Something was spilling loose inside him. He was afraid of it.

There was real danger in questioning the way things were. You learned that when you were a kid in the Processing Schools. That was why you didn't remember much about the past, even when you tried to remember. There was pain connected with it. Moments of rebellion, then the pain of punishment from the matriarchy. Pretty soon you just didn't think anything at all but what you were supposed to think. Conditioned reflex that ended up being hardly any reflex at all.

But now he was replaced. Now he had very little to lose, nothing really except a few dusty years of humiliating dependency on Jeanette and the handsome young Larry.

The hell with them. The hell with them all.

He flinched at his own rebellion. He wanted to laugh at himself. By his own logic it was too late. If he had nothing to lose, by the same token he had nothing to gain.

He had to be realistic about it. This was the way things were. He had known how they were and how they were going to be. Now he had to live with them—a few more meaningless years.

Through the window he could see the bubble of Larry's heliocar just on the other side of the wall. He tried to ignore the closed door of his wife's bedroom as he shuffled toward the bath.

Careful, careful, Henry. Love can turn into hate. When something like this happened then the real test of love began. That was what they had taught him in the Processing Schools. He had been prepared psychologically for this. He had to see it clear. A man could go on thinking something was love, and not know he had a knife in his hand waiting to caress love's throat.

He stopped, listened. His heart was ticking away inside him with a precarious tenseness. His stomach hurt too. He had forgotten to take his vagaspill last night. He had forgotten a lot of things last night. And remembered a lot of things too. Things he had been conditioned to ignore, suppress.

He hurried. Not against time or long-established ritual. Being late at the office wasn't so important anymore. Jeanette had appointments all day, of course, starting at nine a.m. But Henry hurried against a suddenly sharp awareness of internal machinery wearing down.

Funny how a man pushed down some distasteful certainty out of sight and mind, just because all his life he had been taught, conditioned, processed to do it, and then all at once it hit him squarely in the face, in the heart, in the stomach.

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In the heart first of all.

There was something in a man, evidently, that never burned out, no matter what they did to him.

HE LOOKED at the sunken tub in the bathroom, then he dropped into it, clung to its side, then paddled in the therapeutic bubble-bath that fizzed and popped about him. He gazed up into the mirrored ceiling to see himself bobbing his too-prominent, white-skinned belly like a squeezed-up melon above the surface. The water contained a so-called Rejuvo-Salts. Supposed to 'pep the old man up after ninety', but nothing could make any difference now.

He had been replaced.

The mirrors reaffirmed the shock of last night. There were reflections of the reflections shining atrociously from his wet skin. There was even a particularly ludicrous angle of him reflected in the ceiling now. A kind of buffoon treatment of Henry Joad standing on his bald pate.

Mirrors lining the walls, the ceilings, the floors. Jeanette's idea of a work of art. Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest one of all?

He was conscious only of the sagging grayness now. The entire fleshly castle sagging under the bombardment of time's invisible particles. He climbed out of the tub and postured. He grimaced. He examined various angles of himself in a little private orgy of self-imposed humiliation. A kind of ironic defiance of the inevitable.

And then he leaned forward to the mirror. He touched his face. He watched the brown loose skin stretching without tension and moving back slowly to its place.

"Joady honey!"

Jeanette.

"Hey, Joady. Surprise, huh?"

Larry.

Frantically, Henry grabbed, slapped the toupee on his head. He was adjusting the hair with one hand and draping a towel around his middle with the other, when Jeanette's and then Larry's reflections were abruptly there, all over, everywhere, beside his own.

EASY. Easy does it. This is the way things are.

He spread beard-eradicator over his jaws. Without turning, he said, "Good morning, Snuggle-Bunny. And how are you, Larry? How's the young exec?"

"Great," Larry said. "I feel great this morning!"

"I'll bet you're surprised, aren't you, Joady Bear," Jeanette said. "Finding Larry all moved in."

"Well, I figured it was about time for it," Henry said. "I'm glad to see it's you, Larry. I was pulling for you."

"Guess I should have told you," Jeanette said. "But after you went out for the walk, I thought of Larry. I—I knew then I needed him." She finished softly, "I knew I needed him last night for sure."

Larry's voice was loud with enthusiasm. "I guess I'll get that advancement any day now."

"Sure you will," Henry said. "In another ten years you'll be Junior Exec. I've been plugging for you in there."

He could see Jeanette leaning against Larry, her hands caressing him as she smiled in the mirrored walls.

Henry's hand was shaking a little as Jeanette's and Larry's firm naked young figures danced with splendid vitality beside his own reflections, around the four walls and over the ceiling, and then into the sunken tub.

He should be grateful. After all, Larry was the best bet for Jeanette. She had been a devoted and loving wife to Henry all these years. He should be grateful. She had been the challenge, the symbol, the pusher that had kept him going, been his incentive.

Smile, old Joady boy.

Smile and look alive.

JEANETTE went to prepare breakfast for the three of them. Larry was doing push-ups on the bathroom floor. His lean tanned body moved fluidly. He was breathing easily.

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"She's a wonderful woman, Joady."

"You like her."

"She's wonderful. I wanted her to pick me out, but I never really thought she would!" He jumped to his feet and put his arm over Henry's shoulder. It was sore from running into that tree last night. "Thanks for putting that plug in for me, Joady. She respects you. If it hadn't been for you—"

"Sure," Henry cut in quickly. "Don't mention it any more. Forget it. You're Jeanette in the style you've accustomed her to!"

"It'll take time. Don't expect too much at first. You've got a long, long time, Larry."

Henry's toupee was on straight as he hurried to get the nylex work suit out of the closet. It covered a lot. It took ten years from his age. But ten years wasn't much, not any more.

"See you!" Larry yelled out of the shower spray.

It Must Be a Trend

Reuben, Reuben, I've been thinking what a strange world this would be,
If all the women were transported far beyond the Northern Sea.

THE answer, of course, is that the world would be unpleasant, if not intolerable. We need women. But do the women really need us? For the time being, yes. Or rather, Nature needs both men and women for its *own strictly functional purpose.*

When I was a Combat Correspondent during World War II, I saw young men murdered by the thousands, and only luck prevented me from being one of them. From Nature's viewpoint, perhaps, the fate of these men showed that they were merely expendable, transitory parts of an experiment. But it seems that women are here to stay.

Women have watched and waited while men fought duels, died by the untold millions in wars, tore themselves to pieces in strenuous sports, poisoned and killed themselves in laboratory experiments—reaping an ever-mounting toll of ulcers, failing hearts, rotting livers, caved-in kidneys, punctured lungs, life-shortening neuroses, ad infinitum.

Man's desire for self-destruction has reached its ultimate in the various forms of atomic, hydrogen, and cobalt bombs. But the final blowup won't come until we've figured a way to keep a good percentage of our womenfolk safe during total warfare.

It's clear—isn't it?—that women have nothing to do with all this. They merely watch and wait. Healthier. Living longer. Increasing in numbers. It must be a trend. . . .

—Bryce Walton

in. I've always tried to get the best for Snuggle-Bunny."

"Snuggle-Bunny!" Larry laughed. "That's a good one. I'll have to go some to equal that one."

"I checked your processing chart, Larry. And then I've known you for years. I knew how healthy you were, and how dependable. I knew how much you loved Jeanette. I knew what a live-wire you are around the office."

"God, I'm lucky, Joady! I only hope I can keep things going halfway as good as you have. I hope I can provide for

"Hurry, or you'll be late for breakfast," Henry said.

And as Henry walked toward the kitchen, he remembered part of the dream he had had last night. In this dream he had hit Jeanette over the head with a rock and kicked her out of a cave. In the dream, however, the woman had hardly resembled Jeanette. She had been sagging and hairy in the dream. And giving off a markedly unpleasant odor from having been chewing on animal hides. Ugly worn teeth too, worn down to little yellow nubbins. It had been

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some other year. Some other time. He couldn't even imagine what year because there weren't any calendars hanging on the cave walls. Just dried skins all curled up and stiff and clattering in a flapping wind.

But it had been a man's little world, hidden away somewhere in a cave a million years ago.

And the woman had crawled and whined on her knees to him like a dog.

He had struck her violently with a rock and flung her from the cave. And she had rolled yelling and kicking into an anonymity for which Henry had been grateful.

He tried to laugh. That had been a million years ago when might made right. That was a dead dead time to remember.

He was afraid of the deeper part of him that had dreamed such a thing.

He would have to discuss that dream with his Psychemother during his regular appointment between one and two p.m.

This is the way things are, Joady Bear. This is the way things have to be.

Men just got older and older. They moved on and gave their place to an eager, younger, more capable male.

That's the way it is, old Joady Bear. Sit as comfortable as you can on the shelf. Make the best of what little is left of the season.

Killing wouldn't change anything. Death wouldn't bring youth back to Henry Joad. Hate brought nothing back. Nothing could bring any of it back.

He had to see his Psychemother. She would make things easier.

JEANETTE was singing little songs. She seemed a new woman this morning. Younger and more alive than ever. In the kitchen, her little flowered apron on over her sunshorts, her tanned legs and bare shoulders and breasts brown and firm as she served Joady his egg-nog and his vitamin pills for breakfast, and prepared Larry his ham and eggs.

Sometimes Jeanette's thigh brushed against Henry as he tried to down the insipid foam of the egg-nog. He could feel her warmth calling to him in his loneliness and hunger.

"Joady, honey! You're just going to be late as rain if you don't hurry!"

Hate won't bring love back.

Death won't bring youth back and the ardent nights.

"I'll be officially retired anyway," he mumbled, "in another year, maybe less. So it doesn't matter much."

"And then you can just loaf around here, Joady. And Larry and I can take care of you."

"I'm coasting now," Henry said, staring into his glass. "On many years of exemplary service. A pillar of *International Beauty Aids Unlimited.*"

All the time conscious of her tight young-looking body with the firm breasts, small like a girl's, dancing everywhere through the looking glass walls of his mind. Now he kept thinking of that old man he had replaced 105 years ago. Had he felt the way Henry was feeling now? Maybe worse. But he had shambled back into the shadows like an old dog and died there without even a whimper that Henry could remember.

Hell, that was the thing that was wrong about it! Taking it that way. Crawling away without even a whine into the corner, lying down and dying like a dog without even a whimper of defiance!

"But Joady Bear! I've got simply hundreds of appointments today! And the one with the *Bright-Eyes Clinic* is at nine-thirty! You get a move on now!"

Slow old Joady Bear. Her images joined in the mirrored walls of the kitchen, joining and re-joining in a giggling ballet. And the little bit she was wearing made her seem more desirable now to Henry than she had ever seemed to have been before. Vital, alive. The girl I married.

Impulsively, he reached over, gripped her wrist, hard. "Bunny—"

She bent down and kissed him on the forehead. He felt the full shine of her hair breathing youth and life over his face. He heard Larry's footsteps on the kitchen floor. Jeanette started to move

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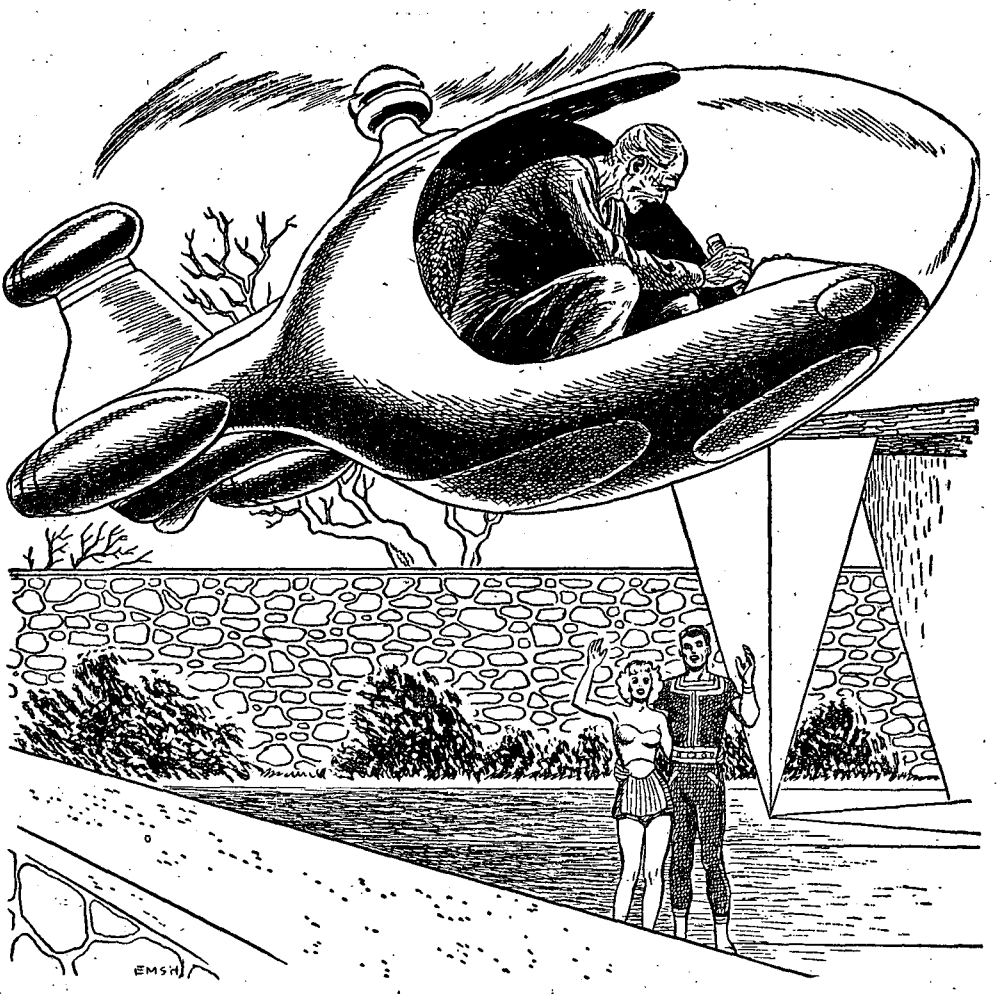

When he flew away in his heliocar, Jeanette and Larry waved to him from the walled patio

toward Larry. Henry felt the raw trembling resentment exploding in his arm as he tightened his grip. His fingers dug in hard. Jeanette pulled away slowly, still smiling, a movement somehow a mixture of impatience disguised with a bright smile.

Uneasiness converted into a sophisticated giggle.

He jerked his hand back and stood up. He tried not to look at them as he went out and down the hall. He had to find the self-respect to meet this head on! When he flew away across the fall landscape in his helicoar, Jeanette and Larry, their arms around one another, waved goodby to him from the walled patio.

But where, how, could he find the self-respect, the strength? Did he really want to be calm, resigned to it? Was this growing desire to destroy something, this feeling of feverish hatred really Henry Joad? This crazy flame flaring up in him now when it was too late?

This light flickering up in a crumbling lamp.

For the first time in his life he felt a lack of confidence in his Psychemother.

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III

It's Fun to Be Young

AL JENKINS, the Office Manager, asked it again around noon. "What's the matter, Joady boy?"

"Nothing."

"Ulcer acting up again?"

"My ulcer was cured. I told you that!"

"Why the belly pills then?"

"That's something else. Kidneys."

"How's the ticker?"

"It's still ticking, or obviously I'd have been cremated."

"Hey, Joady boy, you are upset today. Come on, fess up, fess up, boy! What's the trouble?"

Henry turned toward the window. He hadn't even looked at the ad-charts, they didn't seem important now that he would soon retire, or finish retiring.

"What's happened to the old gusto, Joady?"

Henry grinned automatically. A facility acquired after so many years in the business winning people and influencing the right friends. "Jeanette just retired me."

For one brief naked moment, fear looked out of Al's eyes.

"Well, Joady. Who's the lucky fellow? Larry?

"Sure, I recommended him."

"Great guy. Coming up fast. Larry'll be Junior Exec of *Face Creams and Hormones* in another ten years."

"I know. Larry'll be a good replacement. But— Al— I don't know, it hit me pretty hard. Upset me a little."

Al cut in. "Don't let it bother you, boy." He slapped Henry on the back.

"I can't help it. Retirement from home. Retirement from work. Retirement from life. For some reason, I just thought I'd be retired from work first. I'd thought of having all that time at home with Jeanette."

"So that's it!" Al laughed. "You're too old to be bothered with that kind of thought. Sure, it's bound to upset you a little. But you'll get used to it fast enough. You'll be retired soon. You'll have plenty of time for lots of other kinds of fun. You'll get a big kick out of just watching Jeanette and Larry make a go of it!"

"But it's being left alone, Al."

"Take up hobbies, stuff like that."

"I mean people. I even had this crazy thought last night about wanting to have kids around. My kids, like it was supposed to have been in the old days."

"Huh?" Al's mouth dropped open.

"Yeah, that's what I thought, Al. About my kids. Maybe that would help. A man could live on, through them—"

Al looked around quickly, and lowered his voice. "Joady—listen now. That's dangerous talk. You've sounded off like that a few times before, and I don't want to listen to it."

"But good Lord, they ought to leave us *something!*"

Al forced a laugh. He was good at that, Henry thought. Turning anything into a gag. "Better cut the reb talk, Joady. When we controlled the kids we made soldiers and atomic physicists out of them and damn near blew up the world! Let's face it, Joady. Like I said before, we didn't do so good when we ran things. We're lucky to be around at all after what happened. Don't forget that after the big war, a lot of those women decided they get along without us."

Al looked anxiously at the door as though he wanted to get back to his own office in a hurry. "You'd better go see your Psychemother," he said.

SURE, Henry thought, I'd better shut up, or I'll be retired sooner than I'm supposed to be, and that'll be another year of nothing to do. His job was all he had left. He shrugged. Al wanted to feel young. He didn't want to think about anything that would make him feel his age. That was the trouble with all of them, Henry thought. Al was ten years younger than Henry. But he was trying to hold on to youth. He worked hard at it too. It made him

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look twenty years older than he really was. He kept his skin tightened up with lotions so that it resembled cheap bronzed armor threatening to flake away like plaster from a cast.

"You have to think the right thoughts, Joady boy! Take the old positive attitude!"

"Sure," Henry said.

He looked out of the window over the neat square metal blocks of Central City, the heart of distribution for Midwest.

How would it have been, he thought, to have seen kids out there, all ages, growing up, laughing, playing, giving life a sense of continuity and meaning? How would it have been to have seen them and known some of them were yours and gotten a feeling of deathlessness from knowing that. It would have been better, he thought. A lot better.

But the males only came out when they were ready to replace somebody. And the girls? He remembered that there had been no girls at all at his school. They were educated someplace else. The curricula would, of course, be vastly different.

Henry wanted to tell Al to get the hell out. But Al was Manager, and Henry was too used to being nice. Al was very important socio-businessly. Henry wasn't yet retired. There was another thing to consider too. If he was retired ahead of schedule, he would have that much more time to brood about what he considered an injustice.

Without turning, Henry asked. "Al, how old is your wife?"

"Old enough," Al said. He laughed. Henry smiled dutifully. Suddenly Al stopped laughing. "How old? How should I know? You know that's a delicate question with the gals? Why?"

"Just curious."

The wall behind Al Jenkins seemed to dissolve like a splintered mirror.

"You're too damn curious sometimes, Joady!"

Sure, they lived a lot longer than we do, Henry was thinking carefully. Year after year stretching the margin wider and wider. That was the way nature had decided to work things out.

But how much longer, he thought? *What's the margin now?*

"Joady, I've never heard anybody else bring up subjects like this! You're getting morbid! I don't want to talk about it! I don't want to think about it any more!"

"I know," Henry said. "No one does."

"So you've been replaced!" Al sounded tired. He had never sounded tired to Henry before either. "This is the way things are, that's all!"

Henry's stomach jumped. He felt the raw explosive force again, threatening to burst free. That damned tone of resignation. Did it *have* to be the way it was? Why?

Or more important, he thought suddenly, how *was* it? Was it really the way it *seemed*?

"Well, I just got a helluva shock last night, Al. I've got a bad headache. It doesn't seem right, just bowing out like this. Sure, you can be told you've got to die tomorrow at noon, but you don't want to die then. You don't want to believe it. You try to get out of doing it, try to squeeze out. Maybe you even try to prove it's a lie!"

"You'd better run over to see your Psychemother, boy! Fast!"

Henry turned away from the window and forced a thin laugh. "What a funny trickster nature turned out to be, Al. Maybe one of these days the little ladies won't need us at all."

Al laughed too. It seemed high and almost shrill. "That's funny all right. I'd like to see the day when my little sugar bun won't need a guy around."

Henry blinked. The splintered mirror went away. He didn't say anything else about that. He wanted to change the subject. Al was beginning to sweat.

Al expanded his chest, and flexed his pects. "Anyway, snap out of it, you old vet. Think and grow young."

"Sure," Henry said. He sat down and squeezed his eyes shut hard. "I'll watch the old attitude, Al. I really will."

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Al slapped Henry's shoulder. "Got to get the old gusto, Joady. When you retire from business there's all those years to just have fun in!"

Al left Henry's office. He seemed in a hurry. He seemed anxious to get out.

None of them want to think about it, Henry thought. That's the trouble. I didn't. Al doesn't. No one wants to think about it. And pretty soon you're too old and tired to care.

But maybe he wasn't too old. Or too tired. Anyway, Henry cared. He had always cared. Sometimes he had popped off, timidly of course, and in a minor key. But then he had been younger, grateful, glad to be alive and young, glad to have a beautiful vital wife who loved him and seemed to be staying young and beautiful just to make him happier.

That's one thing you could say for them. The women. The Matriarchs. They were damn nice about it.

On the surface.

But what was underneath the lovely cosmetic surface? That was one thing Henry Joad had never dared ask himself or any one else? Not consciously.

But what did he have to lose now except his lumbago, a worn-out heart, and a few more years of meaningless loneliness?

What *was* under the glittering surface?

AT TWELVE-THIRTY, Jeanette called. She was always good about that. Calling, relieving the monotony of a man's office day.

"Joady, honey. I'll be late getting home tonight. Behind on appointments again. I'll be over at the *Reducto Clinic* pretty late. I've already told Larry you two can play some gin rummy or something 'til Snuggle-Bunny gets home."

"Well, don't forget the Dhingo party at Jenkins' house tonight."

"I've not forgotten. Only thing is, Larry says he may have to go back to the office after dinner. You know how he's bucking for Junior Exec?"

Sure, Henry thought, but was that just a game too? A little game you let the boys play to keep them happily feeling that it's worth the time and trouble? Keep the boys alert and active while they're young so you'll have someone to come home to you at night?

"I know," Henry said. "Larry's a real up-and-comer. Well then, you and I'll go on over. And later, Larry can—"

"No," she cut in quickly. "Honey, you know how it is. Larry's just moved in. You remember how it was when you first moved in?" She giggled. "You remember how ardent you were, Joady Bear. I think I ought to be here, waiting for Larry when he comes in tonight."

He nodded several times. "Sure, I remember," he whispered. "Where are you now?"

"At the *Bust Works*. Then over to the *Reducto Gym*. My clinic advisor said I was getting a little too fatty around the you-know-whereie!"

"I hadn't noticed."

"But Larry did. Last night. Well, you might not notice that—*now*."

"No, I guess not."

"Honey, don't you brood now. I'll take care of you. Larry and I'll never stop thinking about you."

"Thanks, Snuggle-Bunny."

"We're going to take care of you every minute from now on."

He hung up fast on what he had almost blurted into the phone.

He sat there in a remarkable rigidity for some time after that. Like a rock precariously balanced on the side of a hill.

LATER when he dictated a letter to the *Jiffy-Latex Women's Body Conforming Company*, and another to the *Forever Slim Corporation*, he kept staring at the long firm legs of the secretary. He felt the stirrings of desire, but the pushing of his frightening curiosity was stronger.

He noticed a mischievously coy quality in her eyes. She thought he was making a pass. He dropped his eyes,

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dictated more letters, hardly thinking about the *Ladies' Rejuvo-Cream Corporation, the Stay-Sexy Company, Smiles Unlimited,* and a number of others.

The secretary paused in an enticing pose at the door, turning the ritual into an unvoiced bit of irony. The word had already gotten around that he had been retired at home. Publically emasculated. A kind of old ghost.

"Will that be all, Mr. Joad?"

"How long have you worked here, Miss Deuse?"

"About forty-eight years, Mr. Joad. May I please ask why?"

"You came here from the *Dalsan Youth Eternal Cream Company,* didn't you?"

She nodded.

"How long did you work there?"

"About sixty years."

When she came from the Dalsan Company she had been an employee there with a long and distinguished service record.

The words came out all at once as though they had been hung up on the roof of his mouth. "Miss Deuse, how old are you?"

Her expression didn't seem to change. But somehow there was a subtle if intangible difference. Her lips stretched thinner over strong white teeth.

"That, Mr. Joad, is a woman's secret."

"Of course," Henry said. "It always has been."

He sat there a while longer looking at the door she had shut in his face. His tired enzymes gurgled. His heart seemed a mild thunder. She hadn't told him. Somehow, Henry was glad.

He was beginning to be really afraid of finding something out.

He kept thinking of that dream last night. Something exploding.

Sure, that's the way things were. And if they weren't really that way at all, it was too late now, Henry thought, for me to care.

Get out, get out old Joady Bear. It's your time. You've been retired. Replaced. Get on the shelf. Get on the rocking chair. Get in the old hammock and they'll take care of you.

ON THE WAY from the heliolot landing to Doctor Marian's office, Henry found himself looking with a new, almost virginal intensity at the women.

Beauty. Beauty and fresh vital youthfulness and glowing aliveness shining everywhere and showering the afternoon.

He felt like a man waking up in the middle of a jewelry shop. He had accepted it all, blindly grateful for it, never questioning it. Like a pretty dream you don't want to question for fear it will run away.

Suddenly now it was all flashing on like a bright neon bleeding suddenly out of darkness. All this blinding intense beauty glittering like little nodes of sunlight in the autumnal haze.

Oh he'd seen it all before. But through a different pair of glasses. Last night he'd been given another pair of glasses and he'd seen death through them. And death cast a different light over all the other things. An autumnal haze. How beautiful and bright the sun looks when you'll never see it again.

He had always noted the fact that there were very few men compared with the number of women on the streets. But he hadn't dared think about what it really meant. He had been unconsciously aware of the inconsistency in the men's ages and appearance too. Young, middle-aged, the very old. All spotted here and there though now, like appendages, he thought for the first time, like appendages among the brightly glowing women. Like bubbling rivers of light flowing happily with some male refuse floating in it.

If the imminence of death brightens the sun, it also makes even more bitter the awful tragedy of death, that while one lives and hopes, he lives only to die, to grow creaky and old and spent and hurt and rotten.

You can hate the sun then. It will come up again and again, but not for you.

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And the absence of old women. He had known that; all his life he had seen this absence of older women.

Then Henry Joad suddenly stopped walking.

He moved a little, swinging his head around like something on a string. There was a cold sensation trickling into his stomach, and a loud pounding in his head. He stared into the display window of the department store. His eyes dimmed as though reluctant to look. Everything he saw now was through these new hazed glasses of rejection and decay. He didn't want to look. But he had to look.

The window, devoted to women's merchandise. The newer styles, some partly clothed dummies, one section displaying a vast sea of beauty-aids. Surprisingly life-like heads suspended in an odd pattern in a surrealistic design. And beside each head, rotating around it, numerous small jars, tubes, bottles, gadgets, all circling into view just as little spotlights of shifting color splashed. Creams, jellies, powders, lotions, astringents, syringes, sponges, gloves, pills, inhalers, masks, nets, varicolored fingernails, perfumes, shoes, jewels, eyelashes, fleshine lip-sheaths, fleshine breasts, various-sized earlobes. A lot of items Henry had never seen before.

A huge sign blinked off and on the length of the window, like trapped lightning beating and striking and sometimes merely flickering over tattered spangles:

IT'S FUN TO BE YOUNG

Henry closed his eyes a moment.

It was fun. He remembered. It was a helluva lot of fun to be young.

He ran. He ran straight and fast toward his Psychemother's office without looking back.

IV

Psychemother

MOTHER was waiting.

Ever since Henry had gotten out of the Schools in which the Matriarchs had taught him to be a gentleman, Mother had been waiting for him here in the quiet sanctum with the vines trailing the walls and the green carpet gentle as grass.

Once a week for a hundred and five years, Mother had been waiting for Henry.

"Lie down on the couch, Henry. Just relax now and let the tension go."

And forget too, huh, Mother? Just forget, and let time sooth the troubled spirit.

Hello, Mother. When he woke up and the morning seemed gray, and there was another day at the office, colorless and futile, Mother waited to assure him that things were better than they seemed.

When he felt that he was going to fly into a million pieces of frustration and confusion, Mother waited to stick him back together again.

When he had felt age creeping into his bones, Mother waited to make him glad for what he had, for what he had been.

If he was mad, Mother had made him glad.

If he was filled with hate, Mother turned it into love.

When he was ready to scream out against things because they didn't seem right, Mother made him grateful just to be alive at all.

If he went eagerly into his wife's bedroom at night and had to sneak out again, embarrassed, frightened by impotence, Mother explained how this had to happen sooner or later, that a man just had to get old and wear out. Mother made degeneration not only bearable, but gave it a kind of bitter-sweetness.

He was never too old to come back to Mother. In fact, the older he got the more he needed her soothing touch—or did he?

As Henry lay down on the couch and stretched out on his back, in that customary supine and malleable position, he thought, things would probably have been a lot different if it hadn't been for Mother.

But he had never felt this way before.

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Nothing even remotely close to this feeling that the world was tumbling around him, that an emptiness was opening under him, that he was alone, squelched, helpless, useless, an old dancing creachy clown with laughter mocking in his ears. And this hatred, this suspicion and fear. Fear of her even. Even fear of his Psychemother!

He kept feeling as though some kind of alarm was about to go off in his chest.

He closed his eyes at the ceiling. He could still see Doctor Marian there the way she always was, her fleshy arms flabbing over the swollen mounds of her ballooning breasts. A big mound of warm flesh that seemed now never, never to have moved at all.

The questions. The answers. The vague stirrings. The fears.

"WELL, what's happened now, Henry?"

"I've been replaced at home. Larry moved in last night!"

"You're bound to be a little upset for a while, Henry. But that's—"

He yelled suddenly. "—that's just the way things are! I know! I know how things are! Even the things I know about—I hate them. But now I know there are plenty of things I don't know about. And that's worse. That's a damn sight worse! I wanted to go in there and kill both of them! I dreamed about beating hell out Jeanette . . . only it was in a cave and she was just an ugly hairy female serving me like a slave, and whining when I hit her. She crawled and whined and licked my hand and begged like a dog. I liked that. I hate myself for it now, but still I like it too, thinking about it. I hate them all. *I hate you too, Mother!*"

"You don't really, Henry. But then you know that too."

Violently, he sat up. He couldn't lie there that way any longer. He felt too vulnerable. He sat stiffly, sometimes looking fearfully at the Psychemother, sometimes staring at the ceiling, the floor, or the wall.

"You're *their* doctor, the women's doctor. Not mine," he whispered.

"Henry! You're over-reacting—"

"No," he cut in with a yell. "You tell me. You know. You're their doctor really. You tell me—*how long do women really live?*"

There was an almost imperceptible tightening of her soft mouth in the kind maternal mask of her face.

"You think less about them, Henry. And more about yourself. It's your problem, and it's very real. You're old and you'll die, and you've got to face up to reality."

"Sure," he said. "But what *is* reality? Really, I mean, what is it? I might have found out, but you and the rest of them never gave me a chance. First I was shuttled off to a damn processing school. Any time I wanted to figure things out, got curious, they worked on me. And then after that, I had to come in and see you every week, and you've kept everything held down, disguised, made me think one thing was something else. Even giving me a shock treatment now and then to shock any desire I might have had to find out how things really are!

"Admit it," he yelled louder. "Aren't all of us men just a bunch of kids to you, Mother, to you and the rest of them? Just stooges, things to be used? I'm beginning to get some idea of how—"

She cut in quickly. "You'll see things clearly soon. We'll work it out."

"You mean *you'll* work it out! You'll never give me a chance to do it. None of you will give me a chance. You never have, and now there isn't much chance left—for me."

"You've just got to face reality, Henry."

"Why? Why should I have to grow old and be put aside and have to watch them—listen to them being together? Jeanette's going to take care of me she says! She and Larry. All my life working and never thinking of anything but providing for Jeanette's future security, and getting things all set up for Larry

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to move in! But you tell me now. I've got to know! When did it really start? I was young once. I replaced someone else. I wasn't Jeanette's first. I'll bet I'm far from the last. Where, when did it start?"

"Henry! You know the answers. It started during the nineteenth century really, with general longevity and the Industrial Revolution. Maybe it started long before then even, when sheer survival stopped depending on brute strength, and depended instead on something deeper, more subtle, psychological factors. But this isn't your problem, Henry. Your problem is adjusting to what's happening—"

"The hell with adjusting to it. I've adjusted all my life. I'm sick of it!"

"Henry. If you really *loved* Jeanette, then you would be glad that she—"

"And does Jeanette really love me? What kind of a word is that any more? You've always made a big thing out of that word love, but what in hell does it mean to me—*now*? Used, thrown aside, blinded all my life by your damn machinations! Is pity and this putting me away on the shelf love? Is this Jeanette's *love* for me?"

"It's the only kind of love there is, Henry, for the way things have turned out."

"Sure," he whispered. He stood up stiffly. His knees ached. He slumped and pressed his hand over his eyes. "I don't mind so much, rocking away there on the shelf. It isn't that so much, though that's bad enough. It's—it's this feeling that something's been put over on me, and all men. Something horrible! I've got to find out something!"

"Henry, you'd better take the needle. Sleep for a while. You'll forget most of this. You'll feel so much better."

He could feel his skin crawling as he looked up. He saw the long hypodermic needle shining as the Psychemother leaned toward him.

He stumbled back toward the door, slowly, warily, watching the needle.

"Henry—"

"No thanks, Mother. Shove that hypo into some other poor devil who doesn't care any more. I've had it. I don't want to forget. I want to remember. *I want to find out!*"

"Henry, stop being childish now. It's only a sedative!"

"Is that all it is?"

"What are you afraid of, Henry?"

He wanted to laugh at that one. "Why the needle, Mother? What's the matter with healthy curiosity? Why do you want to keep me from thinking about this thing?"

"I only want to relieve this tension."

"Sure. But why are all you tension-easers women? You tell me that? All head-shrinkers are women. All patients are men. Isn't that right? I've never heard of a woman getting her pretty head shrunk!"

"Henry, you lie back down there and take this sedative."

"Huh-uh, Mother. Not me. Not any more. Why should women need you? Happy, young, pretty all the time. They're taken care of. They get all the money, and we do all the work. They get the men they need when they're young and throw them away when they're old. The women take our youth, our strength, our seed, our earnings, our brains, everything and use them and when they're dried out, throw them away into the garbage dump! That's great—for them. The only thing women would need you for would be because of a guilty conscience. And I've decided something, Mother. None of you have any conscience!"

Mother was getting up. Mother was pressing a button on the intercom box on her desk. Mother didn't look very maternal all at once, Henry thought, as he ran for the door.

"Goodby, Mother!"

As he ran for the heliolot landing, he was aware of this shadow now. A shadow of fear over and behind him. He didn't know yet exactly why he was concinved that he had said too much, revealed too much to Mother. He didn't know what exactly he was so afraid of. But he knew it was there.

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It stayed there. It followed him all the way back to his office. And somewhere it was waiting for him.

V

The Flame on the Heath

HENRY dismissed his secretary, watching her with suspicion, feeling now that she was really only a spy, a master pretending to some kind of sophisticated subservience. He gave orders that he didn't want to be disturbed, that he had very important work to do. But it wasn't company work. It was Henry Joad work. Something he had been deprived of working at all his life.

Two hours later scratchpads were covered with figures. He had called five insurance companies, three banks, a number of hospitals, doctors' offices, companies specializing in women's beauty aids claiming to preserve youth, lawyers and investment brokers. By receiving no direct information, he learned a lot. Mainly, that they were withholding information. There had to be a reason.

In every case he found himself talking with younger, eager men. When the questions approached the area of Henry's main interest, his call invariably was shunted over to a woman.

The information, he was told, would be made available to Henry soon as the statistics were gathered, fully checked as to accuracy, etc. Later he would get the information. Later. Everything later. How much later? And how long before it would be too late for Henry to care? So Henry started to figure a few things out for himself. He felt no fear now comparable to the fears of the past. He felt an intense relief, an exhilaration. For the first time that he could remember he felt really purposefully alive.

He started with himself. Being born, growing up hazily in the Matriarch's schools, learning how to be a good husband, a good provider, how to be considerate, and healthy and strong, and a good virile lover.

Longevity. It hadn't made a man's mind any sharper, his memory any better. Henry just had a lot longer road to look back down, and it was so hard to do that that a man seldom thought about it or discussed the past at all. Nostalgia was a dead emotion for most men; reminiscence like groping painfully in a fog with the rewards too insignificant to bother with.

The Matriarchs had seen to it that recall was difficult, even painful. The Psychemothers had helped too, they had helped a lot. But Henry didn't care any more. The moving finger had about written him out. But he had a few lines left, and by God he would make them good!

Let's see now. He had been born 125 years ago. Then the life expectancy for men had been a bit shorter. So the old man Henry had replaced probably had been around 100 years old. Maybe 110.

If the old man had married Jeanette around 20, that meant that now Jeanette was at least 215 years old. Make it approximately 220.

She was still as healthy, young, firm and alive, eager and ardent, as she had been when Henry had replaced that old inadequate, drained-out lover in a dim past. And apparently she was fully capable of running through Larry in the same way as Henry. Larry's life expectancy was a little longer. Say Larry would be replaced by younger blood in 130 years!

20 years old when she had married Henry.
105 years married to Henry.
130 years married to Larry
140 years married to Larry's replacement.
395 years old!

But how was anyone to know how old Jeanette had been when Henry had replaced that old man 105 years ago? Surely more than 20! She had watched that fellow with the forgotten name grow old. Add another 90 years!

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485 years! So women lived longer than men. That was an accepted fact. You could take that.

But how much longer?

Sometime, somewhere, there should be a limit. Unless—

Something in Henry's stomach seemed to turn completely over.

Henry had a daily 4 o'clock newssheet sent in. A telecast report didn't include obituary notices. The daily newssheet came out three times daily, mostly for last-minute checks on stock market and business trends. So forth. But Henry was running his finger shakily down the obituary column.

ANDERS, George. Suddenly on October 17 of Coronary thrombosis. Reposing at Sismo Crematorium, 662 Courtland Parkway, until Friday, 9 a.m.

HIRSCH, Clarence. On October 17. Reposing at Picasso Crematorium, 1727 Kenyon Avenue. Notice of funeral later.

KIRSCHENBAUM, Edmond. On October 17. Extreme senility. Reposing at the Chapel of A. Ribesto and Daughters, 683 Goldleaf Drive. Funeral Friday, 9:30 a.m. *Mass at Our Lady of Pity Church,* 10 a.m. Cremation St. Crown's Crematorium.

Henry went on down the list. A lot of old men dying. And then, almost at the bottom of the column, he found it.

A woman's name!

SCHEMMER, Anna. On October 16 of extreme senility and stroke. Beloved wife of Joseph, devoted Mother of Earl C., daughter of Beatrice Schemmer, sister of Charles Roget and Dehl Berti, Dorothy Schemmer, and Gabriel Schemmer. Member of the Central City Chapter, No. 134, D.O.E.M. Reposing at the Midway Chapel, 180 Country Lane. Religious and fraternal services yesterday at 8 p.m. Cremation today at *Flame on the Heath* Crematorium at 4:30 p.m.

Henry ran a circle round the name of Anna Schemmer and jammed the newssheet into his pocket as he checked his watch.

Ten of four.

He had never read an obituary column before in his life. Somehow, if he had ever thought about it at all, it had been almost impossible to imagine a pretty young woman ever being old enough to die. Or being old. Or *looking* old.

He tried to recall seeing really old women on the streets, at social functions, at work, anywhere at all. He had never seen any. There were the well-preserved middle-agers, like his Psyche-mother. But they were so well preserved you could scarcely tell the difference.

Vaguely he remembered hearing something—maybe seventy years ago or so, about the retirement homes for the really aging women.

Pride!

So much emphasis placed on youth and beauty, a woman wouldn't be seen in public if she were really old. She didn't have to work, run the important industrial wheels of the world. She just had to stay young and pretty. When the job got to be too difficult, she went away into retirement. Into the woods somewhere to hide. Out of sight, out of mind.

That was the way it was presented anyway.

So they did get old and die. Naturally. Of course. But by this time, Jeanette should be showing her age. Just a little. Maybe life-expectancy for women was increasing that fast. That kind of ratio accumulation could fool you. Like that one about moving a penny from one square of a chess board to the next, doubling it each time. After a few squares it became a fantastic figure. . . .

But Henry felt awfully good about that woman dying.

And I'd like, he thought, to see one of those sanitariums for old women too. He relished the thought.

I sure would like to see an old ladies' home.

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He wanted to see an old lady dead too.

Anna Schemmer.

THE Flame on the Heath resembled a small temple in the middle of a well-kept green lawn surrounded by winter trees ten miles out of Central City. The grass was continuing to be green because of warm pipes under the ground.

Henry dropped his heliocar on the small lot to the right of the temple. His hands were shaking as he sat there, hesitating about getting out and going any farther. It was almost 4:30. He felt this cold space opening in his stomach. And all the way out to the Flame on the Heath, he had felt this eerie sensation of eyes on him. Now he felt that somehow he was being watched from the line of bleak trees near the temple.

Maybe it was only his imagination. But the fact was that he felt that what he was trying to find out was very dangerous for him to know. That even the search was dangerous. If it had been covered up so well, then it was important for it to remain covered up.

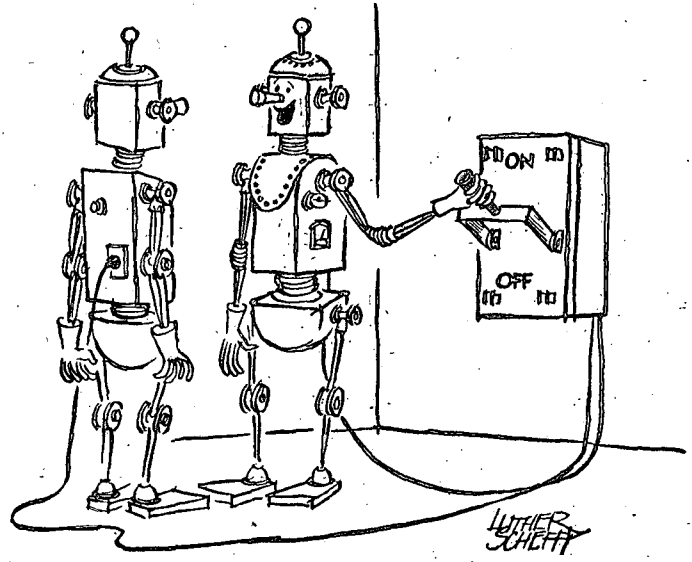
Or on the other hand, maybe he was just pushing everything, blowing things up, trying to rationalize being replaced and put on the shelf. Maybe he just couldn't take the indignity. Maybe the fact that he couldn't see it as much else but an indignity was his misfortune, and he had to justify it. Paranoia.

Assuming he was being maltreated and horribly put-upon, he could then go ahead and build up the justification for his own distortions.

His knees seemed dangerously insubstantial as he got out of the heliocar, walked across the grass, up the steps and into the Crematorium. A small flame burned from a taper in the wall.

An old man, a very old man, shuffled toward him and behind the old man, Henry could see the table with wheels on the legs, and the body lying on it under a silver lamé sheet.

Near the body was a door and beyond the door was the furnace.



"Let's take a nap!"

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The old man came up close and peered up into Henry's face. He was bent with some distortion of aging bones, and his eyes were watery. His white uniform was soiled at the knees and down the front of the jacket.

"You here to meditate maybe?" the old man asked.

"No."

"Some of the fellas come here to meditate."

"I came to look at Anna Schemmer. I missed the services yesterday. She was a dear friend of mine."

"Go on. Look," the old man said. "She goes in the fire in about three minutes. I like to keep things on schedule."

The old man slid his feet across the mosaic tile floor and pulled the silver lamé down to expose the face of Anna Schemmer. With his back to the old man so that his vision was cut off from the dead woman's face, Henry looked down at it.

It was old all right. Old enough to satisfy any kind of bitter and vindictive desire. It was like wax, with spots of artificial pinkness in the puckered cheeks, and a million wrinkles around the eyes and mouth. The hair was pure white and the hands folded over the chest were almost transparent.

Standing there, Henry felt the seconds expanding like swollen hours. The taper flame shivered. A wind seemed to whistle through him. Finally, quickly, he touched her face, then jerked his hand away.

The fear rolled up into nausea.

"What's the matter?" the old man asked.

Words dried like clay in Henry's mouth. He forced himself around as the old man shrugged and started wheeling the table toward the furnace room door And he stumbled down the steps and toward the heliocar.

It was a good job. It looked real enough. Its looks would fool any one. Even the feel of it was good. But that wouldn't fool everybody. It would fool that old attendant of the Flame on the Heath. It would fool most people. But Henry worked for the Company that manufactured that particular kind of fleshine. It didn't quite have the feel of real flesh, even dead flesh.

It wasn't Anna Schemmer's corpse. It wasn't anyone's corpse. It was fleshine, artificial flesh, that was now drifting up into the evening atmosphere in an almost invisible gas.

So Anna Schemmer wasn't really dead.

It was more than a possibility, Henry thought, that Anna Schemmer wasn't even old.

But the name would be dead now, he thought. Anna Schemmer is now someone else. He knew. He didn't have to inquire to check it. He knew that the Bureau of Vital Statistics handling birth certificates, deaths, and so forth would be staffed by naive young men who didn't question what seemed to be obvious. And women. Pretty, vital, ardent and alive young women.

If he did call to find out certain things he would be told that they would check and give him the information later.

As he headed the helio for home, fear jumbled his brain into numbed inefficiency. He felt full of dry and airless space. And his eyes stared into a dubious gray horizon. And he felt it all rushing toward him like an overwhelming cloud—the lost, overlapping boundaries of the years.

VI

The Diary

THE country house of Henry Joad was dark. Larry had not gotten home yet. Jeanette had said she would be late because of beauty appointments.

Henry had the house all to himself.

The numbing shadows that had hung over Henry's brain were lifting. There was this strange fearful excitement that kept driving him, pulling him. He had parked the helio a quarter of a mile from the house and took a roundabout way to the house, then watched it for fifteen minutes.

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Certain now that there was no one else hiding around there, he still felt that he was being followed, watched, kept under strict observation.

He slipped down the hall toward Jeanette's bedroom. Once he thought he heard a whirring sound just outside. When he rushed to the hall window and looked out, he could see nothing but the moonlight on the empty swimming pool, the leafless brush, and the bare black limbs of trees.

The moonlight was in Jeanette's room too, slanting and frail. Outside the window it lay like soft carpeting.

Standing in the perfumed air in the moonlight of her room, Henry remembered many other things that, psychologically he knew now, it had been easier to forget.

A number of years back he and Jeanette had taken separate rooms. That had been the beginning. But like everything else, happening so gradually and with seeming naturalness that it hadn't seemed to have meant anything at the time. But now he remembered just when that decision had been made, with appropriate preliminary counselling from women marital harmony experts, and executed finally with a blasé air denoting maturity and sophistication. Since then, with a gentle gradualness, sex had degenerated into only a mild and ever less frequent routine.

Now the pain he had felt then and many times after that, but which he had been unable to admit to consciousness, surged up in him, gorging his throat.

Now he felt the embarrassment, the humiliation he had not allowed himself to feel before. Now he could feel. He had nothing to lose now. Now he was already discarded, a ghost that could remember the living times.

He stood surrounded by ghosts, suppressed moments of anguished indignity. Those times when, because of contrast, he had been vaguely conscious of his age, his general inadequacy in the presence of eager but condescending but always sympathetic youth.

The anguish cushioned and repressed by little jokes and an attitude of buffoonery. Kind, understanding Jeanette never seemed to notice. Not caring really because someday he could be replaced.

Now, looking back, that hurt Henry the most. That pretended unawareness of his humiliation, the groveling buffoonery.

FEMININE shadows parted as he moved with breathless caution across the room, He switched on the pink-shaded lamp that softly laved the rows of varied-colored perfumes, the bottles and jars. Charts on the wall too. Beauty charts.

He moved toward her little ivory desk. She had needed a desk. Ledgers, office machines. Keeping beautiful and young was a business. A full-time job. Financed by the profits of men in other kinds of business. Every woman in business for herself.

Charts, reminders of appointments, everything scheduled and bracketed for beautifying routines. Something about the room now seemed as bitter and close as mint under glass. Full and inscrutable as the feminine idea.

He broke open the desk with a poker from the fireplace. He broke open several drawers. And then he found them. The diaries in the bottom drawer. Fumblingly he checked the dates first, the years.

The earliest diary notation was 814 years ago. September 5, 1956.

He picked one of the leather books up at random. It was 600 years old.

SATURDAY—Having a Dega Oil Treatment to keep scalp and hair in condition. Morgan knows how to massage the scalp. And with that new oil, the results are certain. I was really *scared!*

SUNDAY—Not going out tonight, so thought I'd give myself a thorough home manicure. I've a new polish that matches my lipstick.

MONDAY—I must decide how I'm going to wear my hair with the new hat. Morgan says my waves

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will fall in place better if I plan hair style and have my hair cut in advance of the wave. Poor Everett. Poor old sweet Everett. He looked so tired last night. I must do everything I can to cheer him up. I found a wonderful *young man* at the banquet last night. I guess he'll be moving in one of these days soon. Everett's worked so hard all these years. I'll enjoy taking care of him in his declining years.

TUESDAY—The new posture guide came in today. Morgan urged me to go right to work on it, even though my posture is still nearly perfect. Ounce of prevention you know, Morgan said. Must give 15 minutes a day to exercise, then taper off after six months. Everett's so proud of me!

Henry sank deeper into the pink ruffled chair under the coral pink glow of the lamp.

He thumbed through the dead-alive monody of a woman's years. He skipped a couple of hundred of them and opened another diary. But the song remained the same. No ups or downs. No variations. Just a change of men, and there it was going on and on. A woman's world.

THURSDAY—Noticed my hands today. I got panicky. Will use more of the Alpha Lotion after my immersion in water. Bought a fragrant hand cream from The Dalsan Company. Highly recommended by my new beautician, Barton. Barton's not so good as Morgan was. But he's young and will improve. Morgan wasn't so efficient either during those last declining days of his. Poor dear.

FRIDAY—I took my beauty-angle treatment before the girls arrived for the D.O.E.M. meeting. The President, Therisa R., finally has gotten me to accept an office in the Daughters. I'm glad now. I know now that I'll always stay young and lovely to look at and heaven to kiss! 15 minutes in bed with feet against the headboard. Rests face so much. And exercises teaches me to keep on sitting and standing without fatigue.

SATURDAY — Hiked to the woods with dear old Hal. So sweet. My feet in such good shape that I could hike all day. But Hal's showing his age, poor darling. A pedicure is a *must* for me from now on. No more foot aches to spoil Hal's outings. But one has to be careful not to make *them* hike too much. He looks so tired sometimes, but everything should be done so that he never thinks about it. I must make him forget. Therisa says the Psychemothers will take care of that pretty well. I was just made one of the Senior Secretaries of the D.O.E.M. They were thinking of changing the name of the Club, but decided not to. I think Daughters of Eternal Matriarchy is rather flowery. But they voted the name to stay.

SUNDAY—My pedicures are taking effect. My six daily appointments at the Clinics are getting more streamlined. Barton has everything balanced so one hardly realizes one spends so much time making oneself lovely to look at. But the men need it. It gives them the strength to go on.

Somewhere Henry seemed to hear the anxious winter calling down the night. The letters blurred slightly. A universe, an insular little world all one woman's own. He skipped many years. He was getting more up to date now. But the song remained the same. Only the names, the actors, were any different.

MONDAY—My new beautician, Pascal, gave us a wonderful new machineless method to fix the hair and scalp today. It takes much less time than any I've ever had, and no dull ache in the

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head either. Joady Bear should be glad. But no use telling him what trouble *we* go through to be attractive and an asset to his social and business career. Why right after this new machineless method, I can be chipper and go right out to a party. Must pick up some new Preservolotion—

WEDNESDAY — O, dear! My back and legs hurt a little from stooping. Panicked me until I remembered Pascal's advice about the constant need for the Youtho-Bubble Injections. Lord, there's so much one must remember in order to stay lovely and young. What a job it is to remain worthy of their love!

Henry's eyes dug at the hazy moonlight beyond the glass walls. Probed beyond the patio and misty mirrors toward the distant hills of autumn. A sound filtered in. And something somewhere shifted with a clothy scratch.

FRIDAY—Found a new pinky-red shade of lipstick Pascal told me to try. Has harmonizing rouge and nail polish. I feel like a new girl since I tried out the new young *Man* last night. Larry's a wonderful lover, and he'll be a good provider too. I still think though, that of all of them, old Joady Bear was the best. So far anyway. I'll hate to see old Joady Bear go. He's been so sweet and thoughtful and plodding. I know he'll take replacement well.

SATURDAY—Off for a two-day vacation with Larry. Joady Bear has to work. I haven't told him I'm taking Larry in yet. I'll tell him in a few days.

SUNDAY — Pascal advised the new cosmetic kit when I told him Larry wanted to spend another weekend roughing it. Pascal pointed out how one mustn't miss a day! Sometimes I'd like to take a vacation, just forget how I look, feel, act! And if it weren't for Joady Bear and Larry needing me, needing my youth and vitality—

TUESDAY—Gorgeous day at the Club Pool. Felt awfully smart in my new playclothes, and glad I took the Sunoilo, the new Preservoil Pascal told me about. Maybe it's the new year's beauty plan, but something has made me feel better and younger than I've ever felt before. Maybe it's Larry—he's so ardent and demanding—

Henry stood up. He put the diaries back and closed the desk drawers. Shut the drawers tight on the unending calender of self-beautification, and self-justification. The story of a woman's life. A wife's life. A lifetime of devotion, sacrificing old age and maybe whatever was supposed to lie beyond.

THE moon through the windows gave them a soft yet cynical mirror look of time. A golden haze drifted over the floor. The bed was a flat white ghost beyond the moonlight that seemed to assume the thick texture of tired gold melting.

He thought he could hear Jeanette's eager bright young laughter calling to him from a thousand different doorways of so many yesterdays, peering out at him with different expressions on her face, her body in different postures. But always the same.

He backed toward the door. The room was still again. Nothing there. Only shadows, and dust dancing in the near dark.

As he went into his study and got the Protector gun from his desk, he felt the pain at the base of his skull grinding and hot. He felt the waves of hopelessness so giddy, and incomprehensible that it was almost like exhilaration, and he heard a noise—half-chuckle, half-groan—escape from between his labored breaths.

It had been many years since he had even so much as thought of the Protector. But its deadly charge was still ef-

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fective enough. Time didn't change that any either. Few laws to be broken, practically no motivation for breaking them.

Then Henry slipped cautiously out a side window and dropped into the dry and brittle brush. He crouched, listening, looking through the moonlight. Maybe he was wrong. But he felt that they were watching him, that they would get him now. They may not have found out how much he suspected and knew, but they knew he was looking. He guessed that that was enough. Stupidly, blindly, he had made it clear enough that he was overly curious.

He walked through the woods, looking back, stopping now and then to listen, startled at the cracking of a dry branch, or the rustling of dry leaves.

Blood knocked angrily at his temples and behind his eyes. His knees and thighs, unaccustomed to so much pounding, were stiff and fatigued. He walked cramped and aching, stooped and bent over, and then his kidneys were aching as if they had been pounded with a mallet and he walked along with his hands on his waist.

His mind slipped off into fevered chaos and vagrant jigsaw images.

He had checked the register to be sure and he managed to keep up a plodding stubborn straight line across the shadowed fields and woods toward Pascal's house.

VII

Too Late For Eternity

HE found the house pushed back into the hill, an intriguing note of organic architecture hardly distinguishable from nature. Dry leaves rustled as he walked nearer the pale light. When a gust of wind grabbed at his toupee and kicked it away among the drifting leaves, he never looked after it, nor ever thought about his toupee again.

The glass panel slid back. Henry peered into the comforting soft light of the living room. A shadow slipped over the floor. A table suspended from rafters by three invisible wires held a goblet and two stained glasses.

"Come on in, Joad."

Henry stepped deeper into the room and half turned. "You're Pascal?" The thin pale old man who sat by the window sipping a drink nodded.

"Hello, Joad." He was the tight gaunt kind so that it would be hard to figure exactly how old Pascol was. But he was old. His head was hairless, and puffy eyes blinked at Henry as the man got up, poured some wine into a glass from the goblet and handed the glass to Henry. "A para-ice, Joad?"

Henry declined. "You expecting me, or maybe someone else?"

Pascal put the glass back down on the table. "You. Doctor Marian told me. She had an idea you would end up here sooner or later. She gave me a precautionary buzz. The Mothers do a good job too. We're all in it, in one way or another."

Henry lifted the Protector. In defeat he knew at last that he would not be despondent, that he would retain one violent shred of life which would sustain him to the end—his fury.

Pascal didn't seem concerned. "You going to kill me, Joad?"

Henry nodded.

"Why?"

"You're one of the beauticians. You help them stay young."

"Go ahead, burn me. You don't have much time left anyway. And maybe it'll make you die a little easier too. Go ahead, Joad."

"Why do you help them, Pascal? You're a man—or look like one anyway."

Pascal shrugged. "You know all the answers by now, or most of them. Why ask me?"

"Maybe there's some things I don't know."

"Lots of things, but they don't matter now. Listen, Joad. God knows when it really started. I don't. You don't. Maybe even the ladies don't know. It raised a big stink back in the 1950's. But they never really could isolate the

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reason why women kept living longer and longer than men. And then the Third World War — kaput. There weren't enough men left to do anything about it even if they could isolate the cause. The woman took over. They handled the statistics, they did the psyching. But there's the psychological angle, that's the most important. The man's world failed. The women lost all dependency or respect for men. A lot a marked minority and he was treated like one. You know all that. Why give me a sore throat repeating it?"

"Because I want to do something about it!"

"You're just one of the few rebels left. Once in a while there's one like you. But it's a dead end, Joad. Nothing you can do. No place you can go."

"There's more to it than that, Pascal. It's more now than the women just

"Nice Rover . . . nice dog!"

of those women wouldn't have anything to do with men at all. They took it over, everything. You've got to get that into your head, hard! *They took over everything, Joad!"*

"Not me, not entirely."

"Maybe not, but that little difference makes no difference. After that war, men were so damn grateful for the women they couldn't question much of anything. People might have thought it would be the other way. Three women to every man. Women fighting over the men. Huh-uh, Joad. Man was living longer. They live a lot longer. How much longer, Pascal?"

"How should I know?" Pascal tried to laugh. "They live a helluva long time. If it's five hundred years or forever, what's that to me? I'll be dead anyway."

"I can tell you, Pascal. Now I know. *They never die. They're immortal."*

"Maybe. You sure of that?"

"They don't die or get old at all. That old lady—Anna Schemmer—I went to see at the Crematorium. It wasn't a real corpse. It was artificial."

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"So—" Pascal said. "They never die. Women are immortal. So what? We get old. We die. Maybe they're lucky. Maybe not. I have my doubts. But after I go up in smoke, will I care?"

"What does it, Pascal? The beauty treatments? Cosmetics?"

"MAYBE that's part of it. Hormones, God knows what else in those cosmetics. But men never started using them soon enough maybe. And after a while it was too late. It got into the cellular process itself, maybe a kind of mutation. Maybe the atomic war pushed nature a little faster. But it was already going that way, Joad. Can't you see that? *Nature was already going that way.* Women living longer and longer. There was only one end to it, and this is it. Is nature really supposed to make sense in the long run?"

"They've been keeping immortality from us!"

"Look Joad. It's evolution. Men are just on the way out! There's a central core, a ruling body of women behind the scenes, and they really run the show. They've been helping push evolution a little too, helping it along. No—I don't know who they are or where they are and I don't give a damn either!"

"I want to know who they are, Pascal!"

"Who cares?"

"I care. We all ought to care!" Joad yelled. "They're killing us off, Pascal! They control the maternity wards. We never see our own kids. We never know who survives and who doesn't, how many are males and how many are females. They handle the bureaus of vital statistics, births and deaths! They've used us this far, they've needed us for a few things. But they're slowly getting rid of us!"

"That's right. But Joad, believe me, I don't care!"

Henry Joad jerked his head toward the window and the brittle October moonlight. "They've got the secret of immortality and they're keeping it from us. So that makes them the worst bitches that have ever lived, and will never die."

"I'm not arguing with you, Joad. They've needed men for certain jobs, for sexual gymnastics, for breeding purposes. But they've been weaning themselves, or weaning us; one way or the other, they're getting rid of us. I agree. A little while longer and they won't need any of us, Joad. Maybe they'll keep a few of the young ones on hand as a kind of souvenir."

Pascal sat down heavily. "They keep the facts pretty much buried because they don't want to be annoyed by a few old boys stirring up some dust. Any time we old birds start getting wise, seeing through the false fronts, the Psychemothers go to work on us, cleansing the unconscious, putting the lids on dreams, giving us the hypo three times a week."

Pascal looked up, and shrugged. A ghastly kind of humorless grin slid over his face. "You're not the first rebel, but you may be one of the last. We're out of the swim now, Joad. All of us. The young who've been conditioned and processed and who don't know it. And some of us old horses who do know it, but who can't do anything about it."

"We ought to do something about it!" Henry yelled. He felt a kind of electric shock in his neck. His hands tingled.

"Maybe we helped too, Joad. Maybe we did most of it ourselves. We damn near wiped ourselves out with cobalt bombs. So maybe now it's just a question of admitting we're dead. Man and his machines, his bombs and spaceships, his hell-bomb rockets, his hammers and pistons pounding out death, his aggressiveness. He built them all up and maybe that's what's really done it, Joad. Part of evolution. Part of nature's process."

Pascal put his arm over Henry's shoulder. "Go ahead," he said softly. "But look at it this way, think about this. Remember that a long time back—thousands of years back—society was largely a matriarchy. Ruled by women. No science yet, no mutation, they needed

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men for breeding and a little fun once in a while. But the women ran the temples of worship, they ran the home, the kids carried the mother's name, not the man's. Women were the Earth Goddesses, and men crawled and rooted around in the earth, planted his seed, and crawled on his way, grateful for a place to sleep on a rainy night.

"Men were just studs going from village to village. Finally they got old and died and no one gave a damn. Well, this is about the same thing. Only we haven't been traveling anywhere except through time, Joad. We were young and we serviced the women. We got older and we built up wealth and security for them, and kept on breeding until now maybe they don't even need that any more, so we get old and wander away into whatever death is. Now they've probably got a good method of artificial parthenogenisis, or they would be having more of the young men around. Look at evolution with a long-range telescope, Joad. And who then is to say what's right or wrong? But go ahead and hate them if it makes you feel any better. Go ahead and kill them. But remember, Joad, it's too late. For us, it's too late for eternity."

VIII

Henry Joad, Retired

HENRY JOAD walked carefully along the outside of the wall. Once in a while he stopped, listened, tried to make out whether or not anyone was home. He peered through the opened gate and then he saw the faint glow of light in Jeanette's bedroom window.

I'll kill them, he thought. *I'd kill them all if I had the time.*

He had that much coming to him anyway. A good healthy unimpeded hate. One good strong positive feeling and action before they set fire to him. He had worked like a damn horse all his life to provide a home and give Jeanette whatever it was she needed him for. He'd never done anything more exciting for 125 years than play Dhingo on Saturday nights.

God how he hated them now, those young beautiful bitches!

Immortal. Not only young and beautiful and vital and vibrantly alive. But they would always be that way. There weren't really any old ladies' homes because there weren't any old ladies. All a damn lie! The death notices were phony because the women never died. He was sure that there weren't any little girls in those Schools either. And that there hadn't been for a long time. Just less and less men being conditioned and processed for a role becoming less important every hour.

He peered in through Jeanette's bedroom. He could see their bodies there in the shadows, locked and whispering together, moving like a slow fire.

He ducked back as though burned. The tension mounted. He felt the sweat burst out over his skin.

He stumbled back, back, and then the hate surged in him and he started to run toward the windows. He felt the flower box smash into his thigh, heard the ripping sound as he toppled over it and the flower box crashed into the swimming pool.

A panicky wash of blood came to his face as he blundered into the brush, and crouched there, his breath coming hard, a tormented beast in the cul-de-sac, a thing of baffled fury and grief, on the edge of defeat he could never admit.

Dimly he heard the windows opening, and Jeanette's eager voice, bright as sunlight, dancing over the moon-cooled chrome.

"YOOO—HOOO! That you, Joady Bear?"

He raised the Protector gun. She moved out and stood in the moonlight. He could see Larry moving up beside her, tall and lithe-moving, and his eager voice followed hers, probing about in the brush for Joady Bear.

"Hey, Joady. That you!"

Henry felt intolerably hot suddenly,

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with a heat that he attributed to his burning hatred.

"Bunny," he whispered. "Snuggle-bunny—"

She came toward him, past the glass walls across the patio, past the empty pool, bouncing all full of health over the mosaic tile, slipping like a young and eager animal among the leaves turning brown and the crisping vines as though toward some elaborate lair.

She wore the peasant blouse, swirling in the moonlight, an off-the-shoulder blouse, very low. He saw the firm high swell of her breasts. She peered closer through the shadows where Henry crouched in the brush.

"That is you, isn't it, Joady Bear?"

He moved back a little more into the protective bushes. Larry came toward him too, his white teeth shining. "Hey, Joady. You okay?"

She came closer. She reached in and down and patted his head like she would an old and whimpering dog. His heart was going too loud, he thought, it would break. It was too old to sound so loud.

Her lips were caressing his face as she pulled him from the bushes. "Don't worry now, Joady. We'll take care of you. You won't be lonely."

"Sure," Larry said. "Come on in and let's play Dhingo!"

"Don't be blue, Joady Bear," Jeanette said. "Come inside where it's warm."

Sure. She had always thought of him, she had said, always kept herself up for him, including always looking her best no matter what the situation. She had always looked so bright, fresh, clean, cool, calm, prettier and prettier all the time. Smiling all through the years. And killing him. Killing all of them.

The pretty, pretty smiler with the knife.

He slipped deeper into the brush. He was afraid now of what he was going to have to do.

"Come on, Joady now," she said, tugging at his arm.

The moonlight shone on her smile. It flashed on and off like neon. It didn't look like a human face, he thought. Trying to analyze it, measure it, you wouldn't have seen anything wrong with the smile. But somehow it seemed odd and twisted, there was something horrible about it, because the expression didn't mean anything, if it ever had.

Henry came alive like a somnambulist abruptly knocked out of sleep. He lunged forward out of the brush with a wild and tormented scream. Jeanette fell back. He ran toward her, raising the Protector like a club. He saw the stunned hurt look of confusion on Larry's face, and then he swung. He heard the thud and saw Larry's face sliding out of sight and heard him scratching and moaning down there in the bottom of the dry swimming pool.

He felt the sharp bitter pain somewhere inside him as he grabbed Jeanette and his breath was wheezing in his chest as he dragged her through the brush. His toupee was gone. His magno-dentures had come loose and he spat them away.

She stared up into his face and screamed. She was on her knees, her head bobbing between her shoulders. Her face was all white and twisting as she stared up at Henry. For a long time he stood there. He could hear a dog barking somewhere over the fields.

Jeanette's voice broke into crooning terror, then into sobs. He heard a scraping on concrete. Like something half dead coming out of the ground, Larry's blood-smeared face waggled up over the edge of the pool. His body wriggled out onto the side and he started climbing slowly and heavily to his feet.

"What's the matter with you, Joady?" Larry whispered. "You ought not to do a thing like that. You've been like a father to me, Joady—"

"We'll take care of you, Joady," Jeanette whispered. "I love you. I want to care for you now. Larry does too."

Henry stumbled back, a ponderous motion which resembled that of a man wretchedly spastic. They were ignorant of it all. Larry had never had a chance to learn any better. And Jeanette couldn't allow herself even to wonder

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about how Joady might feel about it.

Maybe a lot of the women didn't really realize how it was. They just took it all for granted. They just went along with it, glad to be young and healthy, alive, glad they would stay alive.

Do I envy them really, Joad asked himself? *Do they have anything in their heads to live forever for? They've spent all their lives staying beautiful, and living forever, but with what? How will their breasts look when no men are around to see?*

LIVE forever? Joad shook his head. He'd never known a one of them ever to take any time out from being young and beautiful really to live.

They were right anyway. They had all crossed over into another time. Maybe Jeanette, maybe all of them were incapable of feeling or seeing things the way old Joady and a few other old men were seeing and feeling things now.

Henry felt as though he had awakened on another planet. Who felt pity for the dinosaurs that became extinct? It was better for the women, perhaps, that even the tender miracle of pity was unknown.

Henry backed farther away until their images blurred and he leaned against the rock wall and dropped the Protector on the ground. He chuckled a little. Then he laughed a while.

It was all theirs. Let them have it and live forever in it. Larry, you poor devil, you'll be in service for a while, but you'll have your day in hell, too. And Jeanette—he had seen into her world, sterile and meaningless, going on and on. And he was glad to get out of that one, too.

He turned and stumbled off out through the gate and into the woods, climbing the hill in the moonlight beyond the house. Deep in the woods somewhere he was still laughing a little.

And then he saw the figure standing there. A shaft of moonlight came through the skeletal trees and he saw that it was a woman. He saw the glint of metal in her hand. He had known he was being followed, watched. All the time they had been waiting for him.

They didn't want old Joady Bear stirring up any inconveniences.

Henry laughed again as he started running. Not because he was afraid. But because he could feel the pain starting in his heart, and he knew that this time he could only run a little way. And he was right.

He felt the pain clenching his chest inside, shutting off air, sending him into the leaves curled up with pain like a child.

He could see her face vaguely, cold and impersonal and he heard her say, "So now you find out."

She was young, young and very pretty, Henry thought. She raised the gun and pointed it at his head.

"You don't need to do that," Henry gasped. He felt his strength already gone. And he could no longer maintain himself on the slight incline and he started sliding down into the gully.

"You don't need to do that, lady." He could barely speak. "I'm already retired."

She lowered the gun. Somewhere below in the darkness, he could hear the whispering of water over stones.

The spasm in his chest seemed to wrench his soul apart and he closed his eyes and gave way to it. Dimly he heard the dying sound of his life throbbing away.

And he was still laughing.

This last thing they had not done for him.

He was already retired. He had managed it for himself. He could feel the dead dry leaves swirling around him as he rolled downward into the night.

Can Love Exist Without Life? Read AWAKENING, a Powerful Novelet by Bryce Walton Coming Next Issue!

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Illustrated by FRANK KELLY FREAS

Double Date

By WINSTON MARKS

This is a date with a difference . . . one guy and two gals!

SMITTY had barely begun his six-hour shift in the white, tunnel-like chamber, and he was already arguing with himself. He was suffering from a malady common to young bachelors who were too broke to marry, yet too virile to let it go at that. For a whole week he had

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stayed away from Honica Jones on the dimly conceived theory that the fever in his blood would diminish if he saw her less.

But it only made him start muttering to himself every time he was alone in the algae chamber where he worked. He was stationed at the up-stream end of the cat-walk. A sheen of perspiration glistened from his body, which was naked except for a loin-cloth and deeply tanned from the ultra-violet overhead lights.

"What's a percentage?" he demanded angrily, glaring at the algae flowing through the transparent cylinder at his side. "Two more years of waitin' and I'll go clear nuts. It's better this way. Cut her off right now. Forget her!"

Brave words they were, but without conviction. Honica's golden, blonde head tossed defiantly in his mind's eye, and the silken yellow of her hair floated across his vision in rippling, tantalizing wisps.

His pulse throbbed in his temples.

Suddenly a faint tinge in the algae caught his eye. Was the tinge yellow or brown? Or was it there at all? He couldn't be sure.

Stifling the impulse to cry out into his breast microphone, he began moving down the walk parallel to the rotating cylinder through which 50,000 gallons per minute of growing algae and nutrient solution flowed slightly faster than a man could walk with comfort.

Blinking twice, Smitty stared at the blinding-white porcelain walls for an instant to "bleach" his vision, then looked again through the transparent wall of the cylinder. The rotating baffles, sloshing the pale, green liquid and urging it along, sometimes played tricks on his eyes. He must be sure.

Very sure.

There it was again! Just the faintest off-hue taint. Was it an incipient *brownout* that would contaminate a whole shift's production? Or was it Smitty's fortune to witness one of the rare "bonus-mutations"?

He mustn't call it wrong.

TROTTING along the ramp he realized he was almost to the end of the hundred-meter inspection chamber. Conscientiously he strained all 78 units of his I. Q. to the decision. In another 20 meters the cylinder would discharge the discolored mass into the harvest vats. If he yelled, "brown-out!" the outlet would swing instantly to the sewer discharge. But if it were not brown, but the lighter, golden—

"Mutation!" he bellowed into the mike as his highly sensitive eyes caught a positive, yellow tinge—a trace so faint that the most delicately attuned photo-electric cell could not have detected it among the flickering, changing densities and shadings of the foaming green mixture.

With the sound-off, Smitty leaped straight up without looking, caught the safety-bar in his strong hands and swung himself onto the higher escape ledge. He had almost missed the mutation because he was so busy thinking about Honica, and he silently thanked his good luck.

His luck wasn't all good this day, however. When they shot the emergency shut-off at the exit, the great cylinder chose to rupture just under the point where Smitty fumbled for a hand-hold. In the instant before the plastic cylinder split along its whole length of the inspection chamber, the pressure sent a gout of the tepid fluid surging up and flushed Smitty from his precarious perch.

He cascaded into a violent maelstrom of churning liquid, expecting each moment to feel the tearing gash of the jagged plastic fragments. "Oh, no!" he groaned as something grazed his leg. "The bonus! I'll never get to spend my—"

But it was only the dull edge of the submerged cat-walk. Seconds later they fished him out with a sling, dripping with warm slime and gouging algae from his eyes.

Showered and dressed, he reported to personnel, his heart pounding with excitement.

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"Inspector Smith," the man at the pay-window said, smiling, "you have done well. You are promoted to tax-bracket 42, and you may have the rest of the afternoon off."

Smitty didn't reflect that the time off was no gratuity, but merely represented the time necessary for the biologists to salvage the golden mutation strain and for the techs to replace the ruptured cylinder.

Nor did he reflect bitterly upon the fact that his basic wage had been increased not a whit—and likely never would be. Like all workers of the 21st century, Smitty accepted the fact that a man's I. Q. was a just and equitable standard of his earning ability. Four years before, he had started with Algae-Culture, Incorporated, at the modest wage of $10,000 a year and in the accustomed 35% tax bracket—meaning that he was allowed to retain 35% of his wages, or $3,500 per year.

Last month he had accrued his fourth annual percentile increase in tax bracket, bringing him up to the 39% mark. Now, with this wonderful break, he forged ahead three whole percent to a fat figure of $4,200 per year.

Incentive management, the company called it.

Earned tax relief, the government named it.

A raise in pay, Smitty sang happily to himself as free men in capitalistic republics have sung since the American dollar was invented.

HE WENT back to the locker-room and made a call from a pay-booth. The screen grayed, then it burst into the golden-haired image of Honica Jones. Her blue eyes peered at him expectantly, saw who it was, then tightened. Her carmine mouth pouted. "It's you. Inna week, a whole week, where ya been? I'm your girl? Am I your girl or not? All I wanna know is what is this, the run-around?"

"Listen, sweetie, I got the big news. A raise, yet," Smitty told her.

"Where ya been? Inna whole week, I got nothing to do but sit around and wait for you to—to—a raise, yet?" Her eyes opened widely again. "A raise again, already?"

Smitty bobbed his massive head and watched Honica's expression with pleasure as she came to the realization that Smitty had leaped headlong into the traditionally eligible marriage bracket, income-wise. At 41% a man was supposed to be able to afford his first wife.

The glorious dawn of understanding barely touched Honica's beautiful face before suspicion clouded down again. "How many a the others you called before me to tell 'em about it?"

"Just Mabel and Gwendolyn, honest!" he lied. True, the two brunettes were in his little black book, but he hadn't seen any of his other female contacts for months now. Honica was his favorite, but he had no intention of letting her know it just yet. Ever since they had met he had been rationing dates even to her, hoping to save enough money to hurry up the day when he could take her out of circulation for good. But Honica was funny. Let her get the upper hand and life became miserable.

"Okay, okay, go celebrate with Mabel or Gwen, the big fat blackheads, see-if-I-care! I got lotsa dates. Only—"

"Only what?" Smitty demanded.

"Only—if—if you did want to go out I could fix up a double date, and we could have a lot of fun."

"Double date?" He tried to keep his voice casual, but his disappointment crept into his tone. "Since when we gotta have another couple around to have fun?"

"Not that kind of a double date, silly." She laughed. "I got this cute girl friend, see? You'll really go for her, and now that you can afford it, with your big raise and all—"

She rattled on and on, but Smitty was hardly listening. For a long time he had been fighting the suspicion that Honica was just playing along with him for dates. After all, she was his intellectual superior by 22 I. Q. points. It was safe

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enough for her to date him alone when he had too little income to ask her to marry him, but now that he was in the chips—yeah, that was it! She was still willing to help him spend his money, but she felt she needed protection. Double dating! The hell with that noise!

"No!" he said flatly. "It's me and you alone, or should I call up Gwendolyn, maybe?"

Honica's lids dropped half closed, but not before a flash of distilled jealousy escaped them. She smiled sweetly. "Invite her, too, if you want," she said softly. "But I'm sure you'll like this little girl friend of mine."

Now Smitty *was* confused. Honica's momentary betrayal of possessive jealousy set the throb beating in his temples again, like the mammoth algae pumps at the plant. "I'll be over," he said thickly. Honica smiled at the surrender in his face.

INSIDE the hour his cab nosed onto the ledge of the 47th story of Honica's apartment building and kissed the portal with pneumatic lips. Honica opened the panel to her tiny apartment and welcomed Smitty with a hug. She turned to another female, a brownette of rather plain features, delicately-boned and obviously timid.

"This is Betty."

Smitty nodded. "Hi. Where's ya lad? Not here yet?"

Betty crimsoned, a rare phenomena which Smitty had never witnessed before. Honica said, "Get brainy, lover! Didn't you follow me? Double-date. A boy and two girls."

Smitty tried, but something seemed to elude him. "Yeah, but where's *her* fella?"

"Look, sweetie." Honica was very patient. "She's a P. U. like me. You know, classified *permanently unemployed*. E. Q. under 75. Sweet kid, but trying to stretch a pension like I am."

"But you got a hundred I. Q.," Smitty reminded her proudly. "How come?"

"So I never explained it? How I goofed off and lost my employment rating? We P. U.'s are all in the same boat. Our only chance is to hook a—to make a suitable marriage. Now, don't get me wrong. I got plenty a offers, only—you know how I feel about you."

"How is that?" Smitty grinned broadly.

Honica closed in with a firm, wet kiss to demonstrate. A strange, sweetish scent filled Smitty's nostrils. His tongue retreated from the taste surprise, then moved forward again to investigate this new thing. But Honica's lips peeled away quickly. "Get our things, Betty. That cab is eating up Smitty's spending money."

Betty came back in a moment with their light summer wraps, and all three entered the cushion-lined air-cab with Smitty in the middle. "Coney," he told the driver. Then he explained, "They got a exposition out there on the algae-food industry I wanta look over. A lot of other science junk, too. I hear it's real interesting."

"Coney!" Betty said softly beside him. "I've never been to Coney."

Smitty turned to look at her. A girl who had never been to Coney hadn't been dated much, if any. Which brought up *the* point again: What was she doing along on this date, anyway?

"Honica," he asked, "tell me about this double-date business again?"

The blonde hauled his head down to her red lips and whispered in his ear, "Will ya stop sounding off? You'll hurt her feelings. I thought I was doing something nice for you."

"I don't get it. Nice?" he mumbled.

"Yeah, nice. A guy that can afford a couple girl friends at once is a BTO. I just wanted to make you feel good. You know, with your raise and all."

"You mean—she's my girl friend, too, on this date?"

Honica nodded.

"And I can—I mean, you won't be jealous if I—?"

"Jealous?" She laughed in his ear. It was a harsh, humorless laugh that he didn't like. "You don't get the idea at all. Where ya been the last year?

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Double-dating's all the thing now."

"How come we never did before?"

"You couldn't afford it before. Now you can afford it."

Smitty wasn't sure he wanted to afford it. Paying double for what? To have two girls to show off—and kiss? You could only kiss one at a time. Besides, who'd want to kiss Betty when Honica was around?

THE thought made him sit upright, and Honica's arm slipped from his shoulder. Leaning the other way he decided to test a couple of theories at once.

Betty raised her face so slowly to meet his lips and then performed so inexpertly that Smitty found himself deeply puzzled. Another distraction was the same, peculiar sweetness of breath and lip that he had found with Honica. A new lipstick?

He felt a tremor pass through Betty, and when he opened his eyes and withdrew she was breathless and more flushed than ever. Smitty turned to check on Honica. She was gazing unconcernedly out the window, one hand absently patting his knee.

This was double-dating.

He admitted a gradually increasing prickle of emotion, but it was a silly thing, a feeling of naughtiness, an embarrassed curiosity about Betty and her trembling, a confused emptiness at Honica's lack of reaction, a bitter-sweet, torn-in-two-directions-feeling that was at once mildly exciting and distinctly uncomfortable.

Was this something other men went for? Maybe it took a higher I.Q. than his to appreciate it. After all, most men who could afford to double-date had higher mental ratings. Smitty's job, he knew, was rated well above what his meager 78 points justified. It was his keenly color-sensitive eyes that held it for him and made them waive his 30-point deficiency in brain-power.

For the first time in his life Smitty felt self-conscious about his intelligence rating. Why, he couldn't explain, because, after all, no one was to blame for the abilities a man was born with. Modern education carefully instilled the power to adapt in each child, and the great network of government-subsidized businesses and industries that set the pay-scales mostly according to I.Q. was careful never to mismatch a man and a job.

Socially, men and women sought their own mental-economic level. There were no rules or caste-systems other than this self-seeking instinct.

Once Smitty had pondered briefly about dating Honica because of her 100-point rating, but he was not one to be worried with abstract barriers. Her mode of life was similar to the other P. U. girls he had dated, and her quicker mind had, until today, stimulated more than annoyed him.

Another thing, Smitty loved kids. Not only was Honica a fine specimen physically, but she could bear him children smarter than himself; children, he reflected wistfully, he could be proud of. After all, he might not pass on his sharp color-vision to his offspring, and then, if he were mated to a female of his own I. Q. or lower, his youngsters would be job-rated near the bottom of the scale.

His thoughts turned to Betty. She was sort of sweet at that. He liked the way she kissed, kind of frightened and thrilled like a high school girl, yet she must be all of 22 years. But with an I. Q. of less than 75! A man who liked kids would think twice—

The cab dipped, and Betty gasped, "Oh, it's beautiful. Oh, we'll have fun."

"Let's find something to eat," Honica said boredly. "I'm famished." She was always hungry. Smitty supposed that her $2,000 P. U. pension, diminished by her extravagance on clothes, junk-jewelry and cosmetics, didn't leave her too much for the costly foods she liked.

The cab settled to the cab-ramp, and while Smitty paid the driver Betty ohed and ahed some more over the surrounding trees and flowers. The foliage and bright blossoms were, indeed, a rarity in the Greater New York Area, but somehow Smitty found himself enjoying them more than usual, as Honica tugged

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them down the path toward the nearest restaurant.

"I had a poinsetta once." Betty said. Smitty felt her drag on his right arm as reluctantly she left the park behind. When she turned to face the Midway there were sparkles of moisture in her eyes. "I—I'm not hungry. Can't I stay in the park while you two eat?"

Smitty found himself squeezing her hand under his arm. "You'd better stick with us, kid. We'll come back this way, and you can look some more."

THE moving concourse was only lightly crowded. It was a weekday and early in the afternoon. Smitty found himself pointing out the familiar buildings, thrill-rides, side-shows and permanent arts and sciences expositions. Since Honica had been here as often as he, suddenly he realized it was all for Betty's benefit.

She was soaking it all in, wide-eyed and fascinated. This part of double-dating wasn't unpleasant at all, he decided. You sort of got a new look at things through another pair of eyes. It made him feel foolishly important, a girl on each arm, discoursing learnedly upon the recreation park that almost everyone in New York knew as well as their own apartments.

He spotted the science-exhibition building. "There's where I want to go," he said.

"And there's where I want to go," Honica interrupted firmly, pointing across the moving ramp to a restaurant. "Look, honey, why don't you go take in your sideshow while Betty and I chowdown. You said you ate just before you left."

"Yeah, I ain't very hungry," he admitted. "But, Betty, don't you want to see the new stuff?"

Betty looked from one building front to the other. "Well, I am—kind of hungry."

Disappointed, Smitty said, "All right, all right, go eat, you two. Wait there. I'll be over inna little."

They parted, and he strode nimbly across the differential walks, stepping from the last moving strip just even with the entrance. He paid his quarter and wandered among the industrial-science exhibits half-heartedly. Not even the flashing, ozone-emitting RCA-General-Electric display of the latest electronic weather-control held his interest.

He paused in front of the new-products section where a long-legged, nude red-head was demonstrating a bubble-bath attachment for the shower. As the colorful rainbow of fragrant bubbles cascaded over her, Smitty wished the girls were here. Of course, the attachment was well beyond their means, but he visualized the look on Betty's face. It would be nice, he thought, to be able to buy a gadget like that for one's wife. Even Honica would go for that.

Honica.

Was he really going to ask Honica to marry him? He was sure now that she'd say yes. After all, look what she'd done today trying to please him! Was a time when he had to almost beg for a date, but he'd cured her of that by taking out Gwen and Mabel a few times.

Gwen and Mabel weren't even in Honica's class, though—body, face or brain. Yeah, he had a good thing in Honica. He'd better latch onto her tonight when they got rid of—of Betty.

"And in the next booth may I draw your attention to an almost incredible triumph of bio-engineering," the barker was saying. He was an energetic little fellow with an old-fashioned tie knotted under his bobby Adam's apple. As the small crowd moved to follow his gestures Smitty turned to leave. A faint scent reached his nostrils and stopped him. Following his nose he discovered it came from the little booth before which the lecture was continuing.

A banner over the concession announced: TELEPATHY, AT LAST!

THE word had no recognition value for Smitty, nor did he make sense from much of the lecture, but the sweetish smell from the booth piqued his curiosity. It was the third time he had en-

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countered it this day.

"What the electroencephalographers have sought for over a century is now a reality," the little man was saying. "Pharmacologists have developed a new tool for the psychiatrist and a fascinating new field of direct mental communication for mankind."

Smitty looked about the booth for a gadget of some kind. He saw nothing but a bank of narrow shelves holding uniform rows of tiny blue bottles.

"Recently, the physiologists discovered that the brain did, indeed, develop enough radiation power to transmit thought impulses on a tremendously high frequency. This radiation was discovered to be impressed as a modulation on the well-known Alpha waves of the brain, those slow-pulsing waves that occur most strongly when the eyes are closed. We had thought of them as 'scanning' waves, but it developed that another function was to transmit information from one lobe of the brain to another.

"True, the power of the modulation was so weak as to be virtually undecipherable with ordinary mechanical-electronic equipment. The crux of the matter was this: In the bloodstream they isolated a metallic salt which absorbs these waves, preventing their escape. This substance seems to serve no other purpose than to shield a man's thoughts, so the problem was clear at last. The pharmacologists developed a neutralizer which, taken orally—" he held up one of the little blue bottles, "—is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and affords effective neutralization."

Several persons in the crowd murmured in amazement. A man asked, "You mean a shot of that stuff makes you so you can read minds?"

The lecturer nodded, apparently startled that someone grasped his memorized technical terminology. "To a limited extent, yes," he said. "Of course, both communicating parties must have taken the neutralizer, since both transmission and reception are hindered by the blood absorption mineral. Furthermore, I must add, that only *strongly verbalized* and *directly-expressed* thoughts can be transmitted effectively, and even these, over the distance of only a few feet. The brain signal is quite weak, so the old saying, 'Let's get our heads together,' will be most apt when attempting direct mental communication."

"Let me get this straight," the man in the crowd demanded. "You mean, my wife and I each have only to swallow a pill, then we can talk with our brains? It's that simple?"

"That's it! A single dose is good for some eight or ten hours. Then the body compensates—"

The crowd pressed in eagerly when sample bottles were offered. One lady said, "I read about this in the papers last week, but it said the drugstores got $5.00 a bottle for the stuff. I can't wait to try it on that rattle-headed husband of mine."

"Don't get your hopes up, madame," the dispenser told her. "You can't actually read any thoughts except those your husband *verbalizes strongly* in his mind. You may sense moods, but it takes elaborate electronic equipment in the hands of medical men to probe the reflective mind processes and the subconscious."

Smitty uncorked his bottle, and instantly the heavy fragrance, reminiscent of Honica's and Betty's lips, flooded his nostrils. It was so strong that it had escaped from the capped tubes and drawn him to the booth originally.

So—Honica and Betty were loaded with the stuff! Why? What were they up to?

He drifted uneasily to the exit and stared across at the restaurant. There was one way to find out. He opened the blue vial and popped the single little pill into his mouth. It dissolved and slipped down easily, leaving a cloying trail of saccharine sweetness on his tongue.

HE FOUND the girls at a table for three, sat down and ordered coffee. "Warm out," he remarked, gulping down Honica's water to wash the taste away. He glanced at the bill. No

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planked plankton steaks for Honica! She had ordered and consumed a genuine, beef T-bone with real potatoes. Betty was finishing one of the more popularly priced "Chinese dishes" featuring Great Lakes rice, the one abundant natural crop, garnished with several varieties of fabricated algae products from Smitty's own firm.

When he was done with his coffee he suggested, "Now shall we all go look up that algae exhibit? I want to see some of the other golden mutants like I caught today. They say every one has a new taste possibility. Look alike but taste different."

Honica frowned, "Really, Smitty, can't you get your mind offa that filthy stuff for just one afternoon."

Betty looked up, folding her napkin neatly by her plate. "I'd—like to see it, I think."

I'd like to see it! I'd like to see it! Why don't you keep your mouth shut? What's romantic about a stinking algae display? I tell you we got to work fast on this boy. That Gwendolyn will nail him down for sure if she gets her hooks into him!

Yes, Honica. I'm sorry.

"What's the matter, Smitty? You look pale." Honica said aloud.

"I think I want a drink," he said. He needed one. The telepathic pill was working already, and the shock of the harsh thought-words tearing into his vulnerable brain was unsettling.

"Fine! Let's order liqueurs. I want cream dee cocoa."

Smitty dialed for a couple Alexanders and one double saki. He carefully kept his mind a blank to maintain telepathic silence. He didn't want the girls to know he could overhear their thoughts. However, he didn't have to try very hard at blanking his mind, because Honica was so full of food and optimism that she kept up a steady chatter. It would take a telepathic shout to get through her barrage of conversation.

Smitty sipped his drink and marveled that he'd ever thought Honica's guff was interesting. Also, in the bright lights, the fine lines near her eyes and the slight sag to her chin made him wonder if she actually were only 26 as she had said.

Outside, the blonde took charge of the activities, choosing thrill rides that caused Betty to gasp and cling desperately to Smitty's muscular forearm. Always in the middle, he found himself clutching various portions of female anatomy with both hands as they swooped and dived, hung suspended, fluttered, vibrated and cork-screwed headlong through six dollars worth of rides.

In the middle of the Tunnel of Love, Honica released him and whispered, "Give the other little girl a break."

The "other little girl" was cooperative but hardly aggressive when Smitty reached for her.

Honica, Honica, he's kissing me again! Oh, Honica, now he's—

Sure, he's getting excited. That's what double-dating does to a guy. Remember yer 6th grade Kinsey reader. Men are polygamous. Yer doing fine. Let him have his head.

It's not his head—it's his hands!

Smitty could stand no more. He let go and sat rigidly in the middle of the seat for the rest of the trip.

What did you do, you little fool?

No answer. But when they emerged in the light Betty was crying silently. Smitty felt like a dog. Whatever the setup was supposed to be, something was phony. This telepathy stuff was confusing him more than ever. Why was Honica, all the time coaching Betty to be nice to him? What was in it for either one of them?

Betty looked so sad that he tried to get her interested in the park flowers while they waited for a cab, but she paid no attention. She wouldn't look at him.

ON THE way home, even Honica was silent. After they were airborne she snuggled under his arm and pressed his leg. *You can relax now, Betty. He's all mine.*

What must he think of me?

What does it matter? I proved my

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point about being broad-minded, and you proved your doctor's right. You didn't break down and scream even once.

If—if he were mine—I wouldn't want any other woman kissing him.

Oh, sister! You gotta get over that notion or you might as well give up right now.

I could find some other way to show him how much I loved him, Betty thought.

Love? Who's arguing about love? This joker's an investment. I got a friend in Algae-Products. This friend says Smitty tested the highest in this eye-color test of anybody in the industry. Not even Smitty knows it, but this friend said that if Smitty ever proved that he could handle himself properly in a brownout or a mutation emergency, A.-P. would double his basic to keep competitors from stealing him. Well, he proved out today. And that stinking little tax-bracket raise he got was just to keep him happy until they got government okay on the basic raise.

The air was calm, but Smitty suddenly felt sick to his stomach. So that was why Honica was trying so hard to please him. The cramps of excitement from the news about his job mingled with a feeling of revulsion for this money-grubbing little blonde snuggling her over-perfumed hair in his face. Trying to show she was broad-minded so he would marry her . . .

Honica—

Yeah?

He's wonderful. So strong and, and gentle. I'm afraid I'm in love with him.

Don't make jokes. You just met him, Honica thought.

I suppose I'm especially susceptible—after all that time in the sanitarium. And I know our I. Q.'s don't match so well, but—I—Take good care of him, Honica.

Make that vice versa and I'll buy it. I've taken care of enough slobs in my time. Let one of them take care of me for a big fat change.

The cab levelled off at Honica's ledge and made contact. As the bump threw them forward slightly, Betty's hand touched Smitty's impulsively and gave it one, small, farewell squeeze.

I saw that, kid. Quit torturing yourself. You're just not his type. "Well, here we are. Let's all have a drink." Honica unlocked her door and stepped into the apartment.

Smitty now had a firm grasp on Betty's hand and kept her from rising. He waved his other hand casually. "I'll call you up sometime, Honica. Be seeing you around." *If Betty's feeling broadminded,* he added telepathically. He kicked the back of the driver's seat. "Take off, skyboy."

Honica gasped and opened her mouth to reply, but the cab floated away from the ledge. Her telepathic comments made Smitty wince until he was out of range.

He looked down at Betty's puzzled, tear-streaked face. "Where do you live?"

"St—straight up. Six floors."

Smitty relayed the information to the driver who had let the cab drift away from the building, and they floated up to Betty's ledge. Smitty helped her unlock her door and pushed in after her, signalling the cab to wait.

They faced each other in the middle of the tiny living-room. "I want to apologize—"

They said it together, blurted it out in perfect unison, and then they both laughed nervously. Betty said, "Thanks for an interesting afternoon, Smitty."

"Sure, sure! Glad you came along." Smitty was all mixed up now. *It was too damned bad about her I.Q. There was something about her that made him wish—*

"What's wrong with my I. Q.?" Betty asked suddenly.

Smitty had started to turn away to the cab, but he stopped. "I didn't say nothing."

"Why, you did too. You said—"

"That was Honica. She said you was a P. U. Because your I. Q. was under 75."

"She said 'E. Q.,' my *emotional* quotient. I've had a complex about men all

(Concluded on Page 61)

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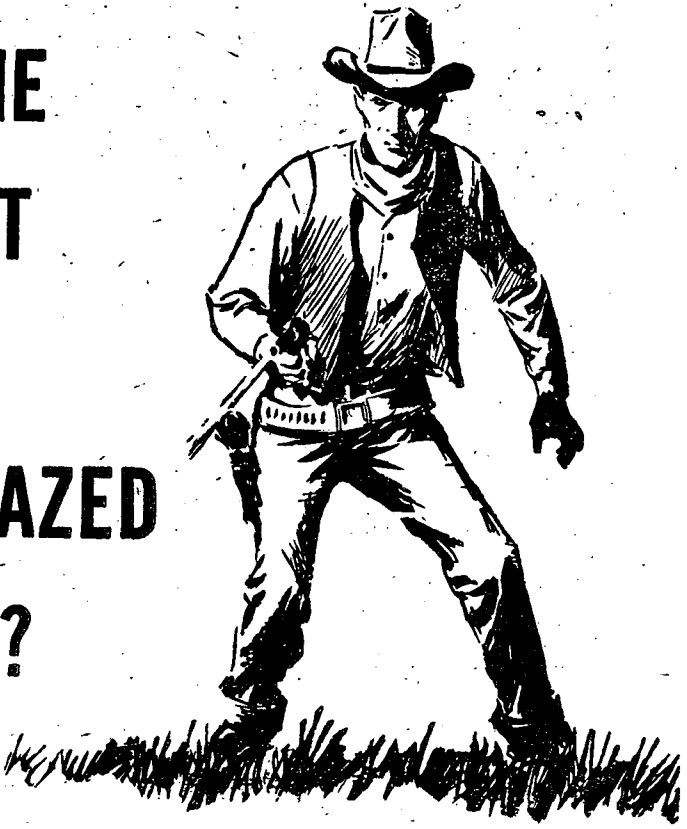
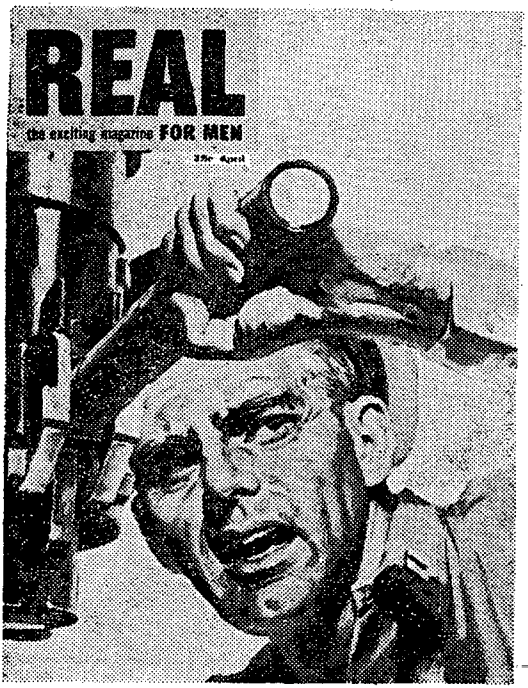
COULD HE OUTFIGHT FORTY HATE-CRAZED GUNMEN?





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NANNY

By PHILIP K. DICK

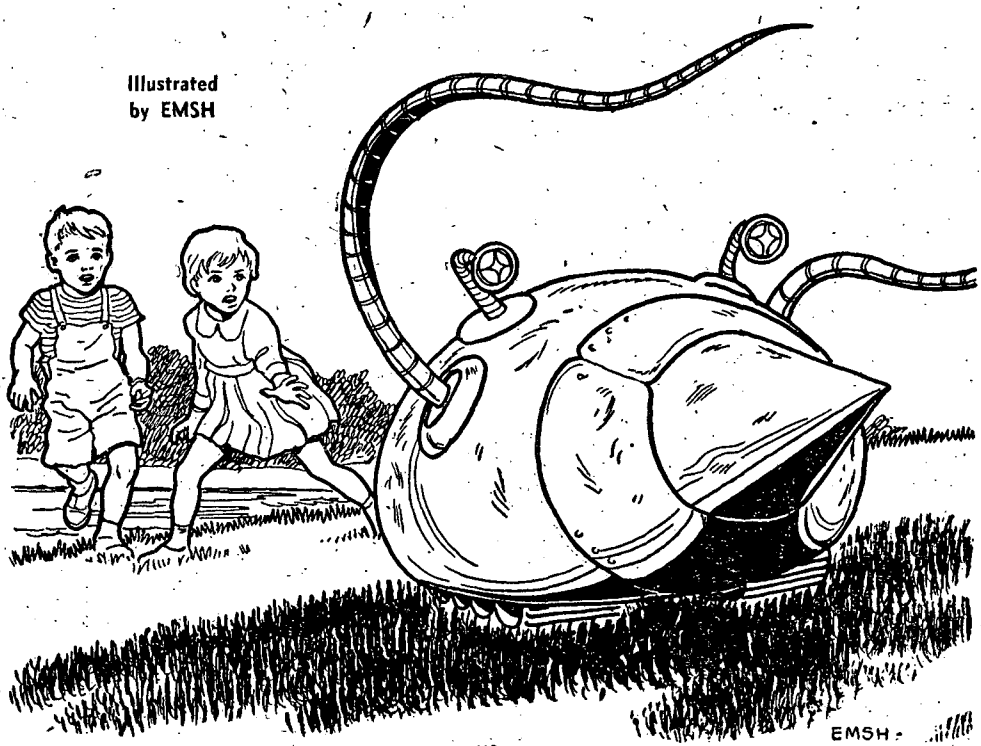
WHEN I look back," Mary Fields said, "I marvel that we ever could have grown up without a Nanny to take care of us."

There was no doubt that Nanny had changed the whole life of the Fields's house since she had come. From the time the children opened their eyes in the morning to their last sleepy nod at night, Nanny was in there with them, watching them, hovering about them, seeing that all their wants were taken care of.

Mr. Fields knew, when he went to the office, that his kids were safe, perfectly safe. And Mary was relieved of a countless procession of chores and worries. She did not have to wake the children up, dress them, see that they were washed, ate their meals, or anything else. She did not even have to take them to school. And after school, if they did not come right home, she did not have to pace back and forth in anxiety, worried that something had happened to them.

Not that Nanny spoiled them, of course. When they demanded something absurd or harmful (a whole storeful of candy, or a policeman's motorcycle) Nanny's will was like iron. Like a

Illustrated by EMSH



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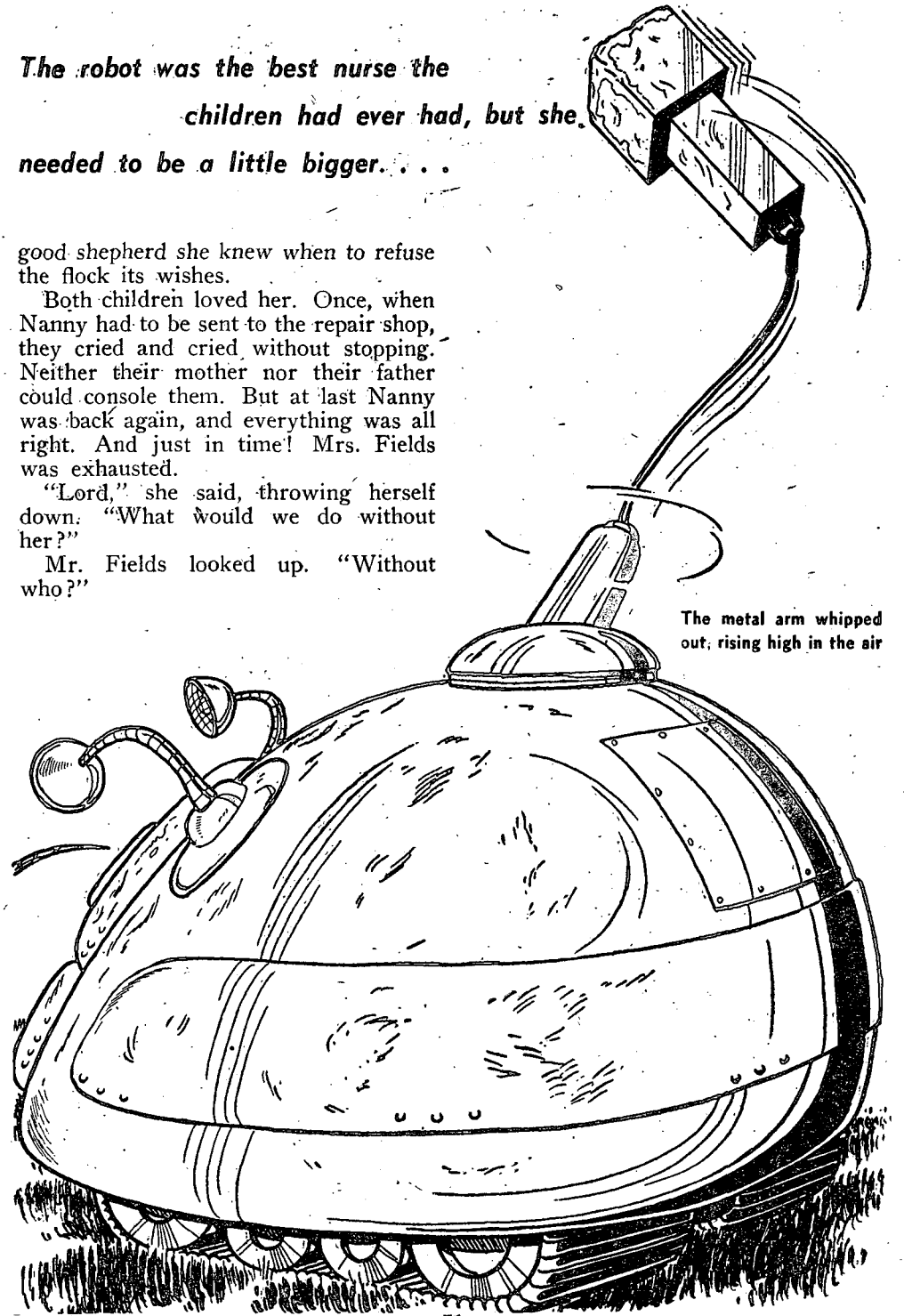
The robot was the best nurse the children had ever had, but she needed to be a little bigger. . . .

good shepherd she knew when to refuse the flock its wishes.

Both children loved her. Once, when Nanny had to be sent to the repair shop, they cried and cried without stopping. Neither their mother nor their father could console them. But at last Nanny was back again, and everything was all right. And just in time! Mrs. Fields was exhausted.

"Lord," she said, throwing herself down. "What would we do without her?"

Mr. Fields looked up. "Without who?"



The metal arm whipped out, rising high in the air

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"Without Nanny."

"Heaven only knows," Mr. Fields said.

AFTER Nanny had aroused the children from sleep—by emitting a soft, musical whirr a few feet from their heads—she made certain that they were dressed and down at the breakfast table promptly, with faces clean and dispositions unclouded. If they were cross Nanny allowed them the pleasure of riding downstairs on her back.

Coveted pleasure! Almost like a roller coaster, with Bobby and Jean hanging on for dear life and Nanny flowing down step by step in the funny rolling way she had.

Nanny did not prepare breakfast, of course. That was all done by the kitchen. But she remained to see that the children ate properly, and then when breakfast was over, she supervised their preparations for school. And after they had got their books together and were all brushed and neat, her most important job: seeing that they were safe on the busy streets.

There were many hazards in the city, quite enough to keep Nanny watchful. The swift rocket cruisers that swept along, carrying businessmen to work. The time a bully had tried to hurt Bobby. One quick push from Nanny's starboard grapple and away he went, howling for all he was worth. And the time a drunk started talking to Jean, with heaven knows *what* in mind. Nanny tipped him into the gutter with one nudge of her powerful metal side.

Sometimes the children would linger in front of a store. Nanny would have to prod them gently, urging them on. Or if (as sometimes happened) the children were late to school, Nanny would put them on her back and fairly speed along the sidewalk, her treads buzzing and flapping at a great rate.

After school Nanny was with them constantly, supervising their play, watching over them, protecting them, and at last, when it began to get dark and late, dragging them away from their games and turned in the direction of home.

Sure enough, just as dinner was being set on the table, there was Nanny, herding Bobby and Jean in through the front door, clicking and whirring admonishingly at them. Just in time for dinner! A quick run to the bathroom to wash their faces and hands.

And at night—

MRS. FIELDS was silent, frowning just a little. At night . . . "Tom?" she said.

Her husband looked up from his paper. "What?"

"I've been meaning to talk to you about something. It's very odd, something I don't understand. Of course, I don't know anything about mechanical things. But Tom, at night when we're all asleep and the house is quiet, Nanny—"

There was a sound.

"Mommy!" Jean and Bobby came scampering into the living room, their faces flushed with pleasure. "Mommy, we raced Nanny all the way home, and we won!"

"We won," Bobby said. "We beat her."

"We ran a lot faster than she did," Jean said.

"Where is Nanny, children?" Mrs. Fields asked.

"She's coming. Hello, Daddy."

"Hello, kids," Tom Fields said. He cocked his head to one side, listening. From the front porch came an odd scraping sound, an unusual whirr and scrape. He smiled.

"That's Nanny," Bobby said.

And into the room came Nanny.

Mr. Fields watched her. She had always intrigued him. The only sound in the room was her metal treads, scraping against the hardwood floor, a peculiar rhythmic sound. Nanny came to a halt in front of him, stopping a few feet away. Two unwinking photocell eyes appraised him, eyes on flexible wire stalks. The stalks moved speculatively, weaving slightly. Then they withdrew.

Nanny was built in the shape of a

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sphere, a large metal sphere, flattened on the bottom. Her surface had been sprayed with a dull green enamel, which had become chipped and gouged through wear. There was not much visible in addition to the eye stalks. The treads could not be seen. On each side of the hull was the outline of a door. From these the magnetic grapples came, when they were needed. The front of the hull came to a point, and there the metal was reinforced. The extra plates welded both fore and aft made her look almost like a weapon of war. A tank of some kind. Or a ship, a rounded metal ship that had come up on land. Or like an insect. A sowbug, as they are called.

"Come on!" Bobby shouted.

Abruptly Nanny moved, spinning slightly as her treads gripped the floor and turned her around. One of her side doors opened. A long metal rod shot out. Playfully, Nanny caught Bobby's arm with her grapple and drew him to her. She perched him on her back. Bobby's legs straddled the metal hull. He kicked with his heels excitedly, jumping up and down.

"Race you around the block!" Jean shouted.

"Giddup!" Bobby cried. Nanny moved away, out of the room with him. A great round bug of whirring metal and relays, clicking photocells and tubes. Jean ran beside her.

There was silence. The parents were alone again.

"Isn't she amazing?" Mrs. Fields said. "Of course, robots are a common sight these days. Certainly more so than a few years ago. You see them everywhere you go, behind counters in stores, driving busses, digging ditches—"

"But Nanny is different," Tom Fields murmured.

"She's — she's not like a machine. She's like a person. A living person. But after all, she's much more complex than any other kind. She has to be. They say she's even more intricate than the kitchen."

"We certainly paid enough for her," Tom said.

"Yes," Mary Fields murmured. "She's very much like a living creature." There was a strange note in her voice. "Very much so."

"She sure takes care of the kids," Tom said, returning to his newspaper.

BUT I'm worried." Mary put her coffee cup down. frowning. They were eating dinner. It was late. The two children had been sent up to bed. Mary touched her mouth with her napkin. "Tom, I'm worried. I wish you'd listen to me."

Tom Fields blinked. "Worried? What about?"

"About her. About Nanny."

"Why?"

"I—I don't know."

"You mean we're going to have to repair her again? We just got through fixing her. What is it this time? If those kids didn't get her to—"

"It's not that."

"What, then?"

For a long time his wife did not answer. Abruptly she got up from the table and walked across the room to the stairs. She peered up, staring into the darkness. Tom watched her, puzzled.

"What's the matter?"

"I want to be sure she can't hear us."

"She? Nanny?"

Mary came toward him. "Tom, I woke up last night again. Because of the sounds. I heard them again, the same sounds, the sounds I heard before. And you told me it didn't mean anything!"

Tom gestured. "It doesn't. What does it mean?"

"I don't know. That's what worries me. But after we're all asleep she comes downstairs. She leaves their room. She slips down the stairs as quietly as she can, as soon as she's sure we're all asleep."

"But why?"

"I don't know! Last night I heard her going down, slithering down the stairs, as quiet as a mouse. I heard her moving around down here. And then—"

"Then what?"

"Tom, then I heard her go out the

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back door. Out, outside the house. She went into the back yard. That was all I heard for awhile."

Tom rubbed his jaw. "Go on."

"I listened. I sat up in bed. You were asleep, of course. Sound asleep. No use trying to wake you. I got up and went to the window. I lifted the shade and looked out. She was out there, out in the back yard."

"What was she doing?"

"I don't know." Mary Fields' face was lined with worry. "I don't know! What in the world *would* a Nanny be doing outside at night, in the back yard?"

IT WAS dark. Terribly dark. But the infra-red filter clicked into place, and the darkness vanished. The metal shape moved forward, easing through the kitchen, its treads half-retracted for greatest quiet. It came to the back door and halted, listening.

There was no sound. The house was still. They were all asleep upstairs. Sound asleep.

The Nanny pushed, and the back door opened. It moved out onto the porch, letting the door close gently behind it. The night air was thin and cold. And full of smells, all the strange, tingling smells of the night, when spring has begun to change into summer, when the ground is still moist and the hot July sun has not had a chance to kill all the little growing things.

The Nanny went down the steps, onto the cement path. Then it moved cautiously onto the lawn, the wet blades of grass slapping its sides. After a time it stopped, rising up on its back treads. Its front part jutted up into the air. Its eye stalks stretched, rigid and taut, waving very slightly. Then it settled back down and continued its motion forward.

It was just going around the peach tree, coming back toward the house, when the noise came.

It stopped instantly, alert. Its side doors fell away and its grapples ran out their full lengths, lithe and wary. On the other side of the board fence, beyond the row of shasta daisies, something had stirred. The Nanny peered, clicking filters rapidly. Only a few faint stars winked in the sky overhead. But it saw, and that was enough.

On the other side of the fence a second Nanny was moving, making its way softly through the flowers, coming toward the fence. It was trying to make as little noise as possible. Both Nannys stopped, suddenly unmoving, regarding each other—the green Nanny waiting in its own yard, the blue prowler that had been coming toward the fence.

The blue prowler was a larger Nanny, built to manage two young boys. Its sides were dented and warped from use, but its grapples were still strong and powerful. In addition to the usual reinforced plates across its nose there was a gouge of tough steel, a jutting jaw that was already sliding into position, ready and able.

Mecho-Products, its manufacturer, had lavished attention on this jaw-construction. It was their trade-mark, their unique feature. Their ads, their brochures, stressed the massive frontal scoop mounted on all their models. And there was an optional assist: a cutting edge, power-driven, that at extra cost could easily be installed in their "Luxury-line" models.

This blue Nanny was so equipped.

Moving cautiously ahead, the blue Nanny reached the fence. It stopped and carefully inspected the boards. They were thin and rotted, put up a long time ago. It pushed, its hard head against the wood. The fence gave, splintering and ripping. At once the green Nanny rose on its back treads, its grapples leaping out. A fierce joy filled it, a bursting excitement. The wild frenzy of battle.

The two closed, rolling silently on the ground, their grapples locked. Neither made any noise, the blue Mecho-Products Nanny nor the smaller, lighter, pale-green Service Industries, Inc., Nanny. On and on they fought, hugged tightly together, the great jaw trying to push underneath, into the soft treads. And the green Nanny trying to hook its

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metal point into the eyes that gleamed fitfully against its side. The green Nanny had the disadvantage of being a medium-priced model; it was out-classed and out-weighed. But it fought grimly, furiously.

On and on they struggled, rolling in the wet soil. Without sound of any kind. Performing the wrathful, ultimate task for which each had been designed.

"I CAN'T imagine," Mary Fields murmured, shaking her head. "I just don't know."

"Do you suppose some animal did it?" Tom conjectured. "Are there any big dogs in the neighborhood?"

"No. There was a big red Irish setter, but they moved away, to the country. That was Mr. Petty's dog."

The two of them watched, troubled and disturbed. Nanny lay at rest by the bathroom door, watching Bobby to make sure he brushed his teeth. The green hull was twisted and bent. One eye had been shattered, the glass knocked out, splintered. One grapple no longer retracted completely; it hung forlornly out of its little door, dragging uselessly.

"I just don't understand," Mary repeated. "I'll call the repair place and see what they say. Tom, it must have happened sometime during the night. While we were asleep. The noises I heard—"

"Shhh," Tom muttered warningly. Nanny was coming toward them, away from the bathroom. Clicking and whirring raggedly, she passed them, a limping green tub of metal that emitted an unrhythmic, grating sound. Tom and Mary Fields unhappily watched her as she lumbered slowly into the living room.

"I wonder," Mary murmured.

"Wonder what?"

"I wonder if this will happen again." She glanced up suddenly at her husband, eyes full of worry. "You know how the children love her . . . and they need her so. They just wouldn't be safe without her. Would they?"

"Maybe it won't happen again," Tom said soothingly. "Maybe it was an accident." But he didn't believe it; he knew better. What had happened was no accident.

From the garage he backed his surface cruiser, maneuvered it until its loading entrance was locked against the rear door of the house. It took only a moment to load the sagging, dented Nanny inside; within ten minutes he was on his way across town to the repair and maintenance department of Service Industries, Inc.

The serviceman, in grease-stained white overalls, met him at the entrance. "Troubles?" he asked wearily; behind him, in the depths of the block-long building, stood rows of battered Nannys, in various stages of disassembly. "What seems to be the matter this time?"

Tom said nothing. He ordered the Nanny out of the cruiser and waited while the serviceman examined it for himself.

Shaking his head, the serviceman crawled to his feet and wiped grease from his hands. "That's going to run into money," he said. "The whole neural transmission's out."

His throat dry, Tom demanded: "Ever seen anything like this before? It didn't break; you know that. It was demolished."

"Sure," the serviceman agreed tonelessly. "It pretty much got taken down a peg. On the basis of those missing chunks—" He indicated the dented anterior hull-sections. "I'd guess it was one of Mecho's new jaw-models."

Tom Fields's blood stopped moving in his veins. "Then this isn't new to you," he said softly, his chest constricting. "This goes on all the time."

"Well, Mecho just put out that jaw-model. It's not half bad . . . costs about twice what this model ran. Of course," the serviceman added thoughtfully, "we have an equivalent. We can match their best, and for less money."

Keeping his voice as calm as possible, Tom said: "I want this one fixed. I'm not getting another."

"I'll do what I can. But it won't be the same as it was. The damage goes

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pretty deep. I'd advise you to trade it in—you can get damn near what you paid. With the new models coming out in a month or so, the salesmen are eager as hell to—"

"Let me get this straight." Shakily, Tom Fields lit up a cigarette. "You people really don't want to fix these, do you? You want to sell brand-new ones, when these break down." He eyed the repairman intently. "Break down, or are *knocked* down."

The repairman shrugged. "It seems like a waste of time to fix it up. It's going to get finished off, anyhow, soon." He kicked the misshapen green hull with his boot. "This model is around three years old. Mister, it's obsolete."

"Fix it up," Tom grated. He was beginning to see the whole picture; his self-control was about to snap. "I'm not getting a new one! I want this one fixed!"

"Sure," the serviceman said, resigned. He began making out a work-order sheet. "We'll do our best. But don't expect miracles."

While Tom Fields was jerkily signing his name to the sheet, two more damaged Nannys were brought into the repair building.

"When can I get it back?" he demanded.

"It'll take a couple of days," the mechanic said, nodding toward the rows of semi-repaired Nannys behind him. "As you can see," he added leisurely, "we're pretty well full-up."

"I'll wait," Tom said tautly. "Even if it takes a month."

"LET'S go to the park!" Jean cried. So they went to the park.

It was a lovely day, with the sun shining down hotly and the grass and flowers blowing in the wind. The two children strolled along the gravel path, breathing the warm-scented air, taking deep breaths and holding the presence of roses and hydrangeas and orange blossoms inside them as long as possible. They passed through a swaying grove of dark, rich cedars. The ground was soft with mould underfoot, the velvet, moist fur of a living world beneath their feet. Beyond the cedars, where the sun returned and the blue sky flashed back into being, a great green lawn stretched out.

Behind them Nanny came, trudging slowly, her treads clicking noisily. The dragging grapple had been repaired, and a new optic unit had been installed in place of the damaged one. But the smooth coordination of the old days was lacking; and the clean-cut lines of her hull had not been restored. Occasionally she halted, and the two children halted, too, waiting impatiently for her to catch up with them.

"What's the matter, Nanny?" Bobby asked her.

"Something's wrong with her," Jean complained. "She's been all funny since last Wednesday. Real slow and funny. And she was gone, for awhile."

"She was in the repair shop," Bobby announced. "I guess she got sort of tired. She's old, Daddy says. I heard him and Mommy talking."

A little sadly they continued on, with Nanny painfully following. Now they had come to benches placed here and there on the lawn, with people languidly dozing in the sun. On the grass lay a young man, a newspaper over his face, his coat rolled up under his head. They crossed carefully around him, so as not to step on him.

"There's the lake!" Jean shouted, her spirits returning.

The great field of grass sloped gradually down, lower and lower. At the far end, the lowest end, lay a path, a gravel trail, and beyond that, a blue lake. The two children scampered excitedly, filled with anticipation. They hurried faster and faster down the carefully-graded slope, Nanny struggling miserably to keep up with them.

"The lake!"

"Last one there's a dead Martian stinko-bug!"

Breathlessly, they rushed across the path, onto the tiny strip of green bank against which the water lapped. Bobby threw himself down on his hands and

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knees, laughing and panting and peering down into the water. Jean settled down beside him, smoothing her dress tidily into place. Deep in the cloudy-blue water some tadpoles and minnows moved, minute artificial fish too small to catch.

At one end of the lake some children were floating boats with flapping white sails. At a bench a fat man sat laboriously reading a book, a pipe jammed in his mouth. A young man and woman strolled along the edge of the lake together, arm in arm, intent on each other, oblivious of the world around them.

"I wish we had a boat," Bobby said wistfully.

Grinding and clashing, Nanny managed to make her way across the path and up to them. She stopped, settling down, retracting her treads. She did not stir. One eye, the good eye, reflected the sunlight. The other had not been synchronized; it gaped with futile emptiness. She had managed to shift most of her weight on her less-damaged side, but her motion was bad and uneven, and slow. There was a smell about her, an odor of burning oil and friction.

Jean studied her. Finally she patted the bent green side sympathetically. "Poor Nanny! What did you do, Nanny? What happened to you? Were you in a wreck?"

"Let's push Nanny in," Bobby said lazily. "And see if she can swim. Can a Nanny swim?"

Jean said no, because she was too heavy. She would sink to the bottom and they would never see her again.

"Then we won't push her in," Bobby agreed.

FOR a time there was silence. Overhead a few birds fluttered past, plump specks streaking swiftly across the sky. A small boy on a bicycle came riding hesitantly along the gravel path, his front wheel wobbling.

"I wish I had a bicycle," Bobby murmured.

The boy careened on past. Across the lake the fat man stood up and knocked his pipe against the bench. He closed his book and sauntered off along the path, wiping his perspiring forehead with a vast red handkerchief.

"What happens to Nannys when they get old?" Bobby asked wonderingly. "What do they do? Where do they go?"

"They go to heaven." Jean lovingly thumped the green dented hull with her hand. "Just like everybody else."

"Are Nannys born? Were there always Nannys?" Bobby had begun to conjecture on ultimate cosmic mysteries. "Maybe there was a time before there were Nannys. I wonder what the world was like in the days before Nannys lived."

"Of course there were always Nannys," Jean said impatiently. "If there weren't, where did they come from?"

Bobby couldn't answer that. He meditated for a time, but presently he became sleepy . . . he was really too young to solve such problems. His eyelids became heavy and he yawned. Both he and Jean lay on the warm grass by the edge of the lake, watching the sky and the clouds, listening to the wind moving through the grove of cedar trees. Beside them the battered green Nanny rested and recuperated her meager strength.

A little girl came slowly across the field of grass, a pretty child in a blue dress with a bright ribbon in her long dark hair. She was coming toward the lake.

"Look," Jean said. "There's Phyllis Casworthy. She has an *orange* Nanny."

They watched, interested. "Who ever heard of an orange Nanny?" Bobby said, disgusted. The girl and her Nanny crossed the path a short distance down, and reached the edge of the lake. She and her orange Nanny halted, gazing around at the water and the white sails of toy boats, the mechanical fish.

"Her Nanny is bigger than ours," Jean observed.

"That's true," Bobby admitted. He thumped the green side loyally. "But ours is nicer. Isn't she?"

Their Nanny did not move. Sur-

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prised, he turned to look. The green Nanny stood rigid, taut. Its better eye stalk was far out, staring at the orange Nanny fixedly, unwinkingly.

"What's the matter?" Bobby asked uncomfortably.

"Nanny, what's the matter?" Jean echoed.

The green Nanny whirred, as its gears meshed. Its treads dropped and locked into place with a sharp metallic snap. Slowly its doors retracted and its grapples slithered out.

"Nanny, what are you doing?" Jean scrambled nervously to her feet. Bobby leaped up, too.

"Nanny! What's going on?"

"Let's go," Jean said, frightened. "Let's go home."

"Come on, Nanny," Bobby ordered. "We're going home, now."

The green Nanny moved away from them; it was totally unaware of their existence. Down the lake-side the other Nanny, the great orange Nanny, detached itself from the little girl and began to flow.

"Nanny, you come back!" the little girl's voice came, shrill and apprehensive.

Jean and Bobby rushed up the sloping lawn, away from the lake. "She'll come!" Bobby said. "Nanny! Please come!"

But the Nanny did not come.

The orange Nanny neared. It was huge, much more immense than the blue Mecho jaw-model that had come into the backyard that night. That one now lay scattered in pieces on the far side of the fence, hull ripped open, its parts strewn everywhere.

This Nanny was the largest the green Nanny had ever seen. The green Nanny moved awkwardly to meet it, raising its grapples and preparing its internal shields. But the orange Nanny was unbending a square arm of metal, mounted on a long cable. The metal arm whipped out, rising high in the air. It began to whirl in a circle, gathering ominous velocity, faster and faster.

The green Nanny hesitated. It retreated, moving uncertainly away from the swinging mace of metal. And as it rested warily, unhappily, trying to make up its mind, the other leaped.

"Nanny!" Jean screamed.

"Nanny! Nanny!"

The two metal bodies rolled furiously in the grass, fighting and struggling desperately. Again and again the metal mace came, bashing wildly into the green side. The warm sun shone benignly down on them. The surface of the lake eddied gently in the wind.

"Nanny!" Bobby screamed, helplessly jumping up and down.

But there was no response from the frenzied, twisting mass of crashing orange and green.

"WHAT are you going to do?" Mary Fields asked, tight-lipped and pale.

"You stay here." Tom grabbed up his coat and threw it on; he yanked his hat down from the closet shelf and strode toward the front door.

"Where are you going?"

"Is the cruiser out front?" Tom pulled open the front door and made his way out onto the porch. The two children, miserable and trembling, watched him fearfully.

"Yes," Mary murmured, "it's out front. But where—"

Tom turned abruptly to the children. "You're sure she's—*dead?*"

Bobby nodded. His face was streaked with grimy tears. "Pieces . . . all over the lawn."

Tom nodded grimly. "I'll be right back. And don't worry at all. You three stay here."

He strode down the front steps, down the walk, to the parked cruiser. A moment later they heard him drive furiously away.

HE HAD to go to several agencies before he found what he wanted. Service Industries had nothing he could use; he was through with them. It was at Allied Domestic that he saw exactly what he was looking for, displayed in

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their luxurious, well-lighted window. They were just closing, but the clerk let him inside when he saw the expression on his face.

"I'll take it," Tom said, reaching into his coat for his checkbook.

"Which one, sir?" the clerk faltered.

"The big one. The big black one in the window. With the four arms and the ram in front."

The clerk beamed, his face aglow with pleasure. "Yes sir!" he cried, whipping out his order pad. "The Imperator Delux, with power-beam focus. Did you want the optional high-velocity grapple-lock and the remote-control feedback? At moderate cost, we can equip her with a visual report screen; you can follow the situation from the comfort of your own living room."

"The situation?" Tom said thickly.

"As she goes into action." The clerk began writing rapidly. "And I mean *action*—this model warms up and closes in on its adversary within fifteen seconds of the time it's activated. You can't find faster reaction in any single-unit models, ours or anybody else's. Six months ago, they said fifteen second closing was a pipe-dream." The clerk laughed excitedly. "But science strides on."

A strange, cold numbness settled over Tom Fields. "Listen," he said hoarsely. Grabbing the clerk by the lapel he yanked him closer. The order pad fluttered away; the clerk gulped with surprise and fright. "Listen to me," Tom grated, "you're building these things bigger all the time—*aren't you?* Every year, new models, new weapons. You and all the other companies—building them with improved equipment to destroy each other."

"Oh," the clerk squeaked indignantly, "Allied Domestic's models are *never* destroyed. Banged up a little now and then, perhaps, but you show me one of our models that's been put out of commission." With dignity, he retrieved his order pad and smoothed down his coat. "No, sir," he said emphatically, "our models survive. Why, I saw a seven-year-old Allied running around, an old Model 3-S. Dented a bit, perhaps, but plenty of fire left. I'd like to see one of those cheap Protecto-Corp. models try to tangle with *that.*"

Controlling himself with an effort, Tom asked: "But why? What's it all for? What's the purpose in this—combat? This competition between them?"

The clerk hesitated. Uncertainly, he began again with his order pad. "Yes sir," he said. "Competition; you put your finger right on it. Successful competition, to be exact. Allied Domestic doesn't meet competition—it *demolishes* it."

It took a second for Tom Fields to react. Then understanding came. "I see," he said. "In other words, every year these things are obsolete. No good, not large enough. Not powerful enough. And if they're not replaced, if I don't

(Turn page)

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get a new one, a more advanced model—"

"Your present Nanny was, ah, the loser?" The clerk smiled knowingly. "Your present model was, perhaps, slightly anachronistic? It failed to meet present-day standards of competition? It, ah, failed to come out at the end of the day?"

"It never came home," Tom said thickly.

"Yes, it was demolished . . . I fully understand. Very common. You see, sir, you don't have a choice. It's nobody's fault, sir. Don't blame us; don't blame Allied Domestic."

"But," Tom said harshly, "when one is destroyed, that means you sell another one. That means a sale for you. Money in the cash register."

"True. But we all have to meet contemporary standards of excellence. We can't let ourselves fall behind . . . as you saw, sir, if you don't mind my saying so, you saw the unfortunate consequences of falling behind."

"Yes," Tom agreed, in an almost inaudible voice. "They told me not to have her repaired. They said I should replace her."

The clerk's confident, smugly-beaming face seemed to expand. Like a miniature sun, it glowed happily, exaltedly. "But now you're all set up, sir. With this model you're right up there in the front. Your worries are over, Mister . . ." He halted expectantly. "Your name, sir? To whom shall I make out this purchase order?"

BOBBY and Jean watched with fascination as the delivery men lugged the enormous crate into the living room. Grunting and sweating, they set it down and straightened gratefully up.

"All right," Tom said crisply. "Thanks."

"Not at all, mister." The delivery men stalked out, noisily closing the door after them.

"Daddy, what is it?" Jean whispered. The two children came cautiously around the crate, wide-eyed and awed.

"You'll see in a minute."

"Tom, it's past their bedtime," Mary protested. "Can't they look at it tomorrow?"

"I want them to look at it *now*." Tom disappeared downstairs into the basement and returned with a screwdriver. Kneeling on the floor beside the crate he began rapidly unscrewing the bolts that held it together. "They can go to bed a little late, for once."

He removed the boards, one by one, working expertly and calmly. At last the final board was gone, propped up against the wall with the others. He unclipped the book of instructions and the 90-day warranty and handed them to Mary. "Hold onto these."

"It's a Nanny!" Bobby cried.

"It's a huge, huge Nanny!"

In the crate the great black shape lay quietly, like an enormous metal tortoise, encased in a coating of grease. Carefully checked, oiled, and fully guaranteed. Tom nodded. "That's right. It's a Nanny, a new Nanny. To take the place of the old one."

"For *us*?"

"Yes." Tom sat down in a nearby chair and lit a cigarette. "Tomorrow morning we'll turn her on and warm her up. See how she runs."

The children's eyes were like saucers. Neither of them could breathe or speak.

"But this time," Mary said, "you must stay away from the park. Don't take her near the park. You hear?"

"No," Tom contradicted. "They can go in the park."

Mary glanced uncertainly at him. "But that orange thing might—"

Tom smiled grimly. "It's fine with me if they go into the park." He leaned toward Bobby and Jean. "You kids go into the park any time you want. And don't be afraid of anything. Of anything or anyone. Remember that."

He kicked the end of the massive crate with his toe.

"There isn't anything in the world you have to be afraid of. Not any more."

Bobby and Jean nodded, still gazing fixedly into the crate.

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"All right, Daddy," Jean breathed.

"Boy, look at her!" Bobby whispered. "Just look at her! I can hardly wait 'til tomorrow!"

MRS. ANDREW CASWORTHY greeted her husband on the front steps of their attractive three-story house, wringing her hands anxiously.

"What's the matter?" Casworthy grunted, taking off his hat. With his pocket handkerchief he wiped sweat from his florid face. "Lord, it was hot today. What's wrong? What is it?"

"Andrew, I'm afraid—"

"What the hell happened?"

"Phyllis came home from the park today without her Nanny. She was bent and scratched yesterday when Phyllis brought her home, and Phyllis is so upset I can't make out—"

"Without her Nanny?"

"She came home alone. By herself. All alone."

Slow rage suffused the man's heavy features. "What happened?"

"Something in the park, like yesterday. Something attacked her Nanny. Destroyed her! I can't get the story exactly straight, but something black, something huge and black . . . it must have been another Nanny."

Casworthy's jaw slowly jutted out. His thick-set face turned ugly dark red, a deep unwholesome flush that rose ominously and settled in place. Abruptly, he turned on his heel.

"Where are you going?" his wife fluttered nervously.

The paunchy, red-faced man stalked rapidly down the walk toward his sleek surface cruiser, already reaching for the door handle.

"I'm going to shop for another Nanny," he muttered. "The best damn Nanny I can get. Even if I have to go to a hundred stores. I want the best—and the biggest."

"But dear," his wife began, hurrying apprehensively after him, "can we really afford it?" Wringing her hands together anxiously, she raced on: "I mean, wouldn't it be better to wait? Until you've had time to think it over, perhaps. Maybe later on, when you're a little more—calm."

But Andrew Casworthy wasn't listening. Already the surface cruiser boiled with quick, eager life, ready to leap forward. "Nobody's going to get ahead of me," he said grimly, his heavy lips twitching. "I'll show them, all of them. Even if I have to get a new size designed. Even if I have to get one of those manufacturers to turn out a new model for me!"

And, oddly, he knew one of them would.

DOUBLE DATE

(Concluded from Page 48)

my life. Before I went to the sanitarium for treatment I'd scream if a man brushed against me. I must be cured now, because I—" her head dropped and that curious red coloring came into her pale cheeks again, "—I feel much differently now."

"But your I. Q.?" Smitty persisted.

"I'm not even sure. In the 120's somewhere. Is it so important?"

Smitty's face lighted up with a full grin. "Sure is if a man wants kids smarter than he is." He turned, paid off the cabby and closed the door.

He wrapped his long arms around her fragile body. She began trembling again, and for a minute he was afraid she might scream, but then she quieted and turned her face up to him.

He said, "Funny, with all the talkin' we do, how mixed up we get sometimes. Maybe if we got our heads together and did more thinkin'—and less talkin'—"

He tried it. Then she tried it. And it worked. It worked fine. And they lived telepathically ever after.

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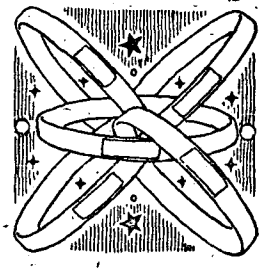
The Thought Translator

By GOTTHARD GUNTHER

A MAN once approached an ancient, shabbily-dressed philosopher in the market-place of Athens and said musingly, "I have often wondered why people are willing to give alms to the sick and poor, but never to philosophers who are often in worse straits."

"My dear friend," the philosopher answered, "I can answer your question. If one meets a person who is poor or sick, he will always think: This is a thing that may some day happen to me, too. In order to placate the deities which direct his destiny, he opens his purse and heart. But if the same man meets a philosopher he will say: This man is what he is because he is wiser than anybody else. That could never happen to me!"



I do not think times have changed very much since then. In this article I am going to develop the basic principle of a thought translator. But if I were to go to the Patent Office to obtain protection against later industrial exploitation of my idea, I would certainly be refused. And what an excuse they would have! Remember the story of the fellow who wanted to have his submarine periscope design secured by a patent? He was refused on the ground that his periscope had already been described in Jules Verne's famous novel "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." I am afraid I am in the same boat. You've read Lewis Carrol's "Through the Looking-Glass." Remember where Alice steps through a mirror and—well, the fourth chapter contains a description of a thought translator! Couched in fairy-tale terms, the description is given as part of the story of Tweedledee and Tweedledum. And here is what you should know about it:

Tweedledee and Tweedledum look exactly alike, but no matter what the first says the other shouts: "Contrariwise!"

This is identical to the logical situation which would arise if two intelligent races with mutually exclusive mentalities, (that is a human-type mind and a seetee-mind) were to meet each other. In such a theoretical situation, where the human mind is positive, the alien mind must necessarily be negative and vice versa. Accordingly, the chapter about the Tweedle-twins starts out with the following significant lines. Tweedledum addresses Alice, "If you think we are wax-works you ought to pay. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing. Nohow!" And Tweedledum adds: "Contrariwise, if you think we're alive, you ought to speak." The alternative of mutually exclusive terms is in this case, of course, dead or alive. Any other total alternative might do as well, but they all boil down to the purely logical one:

it is

or

it is not.

Accordingly, Tweedledum informs Alice: "If it was so, it might be; and if it were so it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't.

Concluding a Series by a Noted Metaphysician

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That's logic." It is logic indeed! Any logical system we can construct is always a systematic order of tautologies of the general form: if it is, then—and only then—it is. And: if it is not, then—and only then—it is not. There is no doubt Tweedledee knows his logic. On the other hand: to every positive statement his brother makes, Tweedledum bellows, "Contrariwise!" This obviously means that all the statements made by the Tweedle-twins can be separated into two independent systems which have first the following forms:

(I)

It is . . . . . .
It is . . . . . .
" " . . . . . .
" " . . . . . .

and

(II)

It is not . . . . . .
It is not . . . . . .
" " " . . . . . .
" " " . . . . . .

The blanks may be filled with any logical predicate, provided the sequence of predicates is the same in system (I) and (II). Furthermore, both systems must contain an infinite number of statements. So far our two systems seem to differ materially as to what is inside the square. But as Tweedledum and Tweedledee are exactly alike and the only way for Alice to tell them apart is to read the letter sequences "Dum" and "Dee" which are embroidered on their collars, we are going to make the contents of the two systems also alike and merely mark one with a label. This is possible, because if all the conditions for system (II) as given above are fulfilled we are permitted to take the infinite series of "nots" out of system (II) and place a single "not" in front of the whole system.* Now (I) and (II) are materially exactly alike—like Tweedledum and Tweedledee—but they are total denials of one another.

*This procedure is permissible according to a law of the mathematical theory of transfinite sets. The systems (I) and (II) are logically equivalent.

This is precisely the situation in which we would find ourselves if we ever met an alien race with a contra-Aristotelian or seetee mentality. Direct spiritual communication is possible between different mental types only so long as their systems of thinking either coincide completely with each other or partially overlap. But all direct intellectual contact must stop if the only relation between two such systems is established by a total negation, which says: there is not one positive truth the aliens have in common with us.

THERE is only one way to establish contact—albeit indirectly—between a human and a seetee mentality! This is to design a robot-brain which incorporates a three-valued system of logic. Our mind—let us say it is Tweedledum—and the seetee-mind, represented by Tweedledee, mutually contradict each other in the antithesis of the first two values. But if the robot mind integrates our mutually exclusive two-valued concepts into his three-valued system, my ideas as well as those of the seetee mind will be interpreted in terms of a third value. However, since the human mind is Aristotelian and the seetee mind contra-Aristotelian, each thinking in two-valued terms, the third robotic value will be indifferent relative to the counter-position of the Aristotelian and the contra-Aristotelian system. In other words: if my ideas are transposed into the three-valued system of a robot brain and the same takes place with the concepts of a seetee subject, the third value will turn up in both Aristotelian and contra-Aristotelian logics in a strictly corresponding manner. That means: the two procedures of thinking which are mutually exclusive in a two-valued system do overlap in a three-valued system of robot-mentality.

In the preceding article—*The Soul of a Robot*—we demonstrated how a basic logical concept like "and" was reflected in three different meanings of "and" within the mental structure of a robot. I shall repeat the necessary tables from *The Soul of a Robot* here.

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p	q	$p^{\bullet}q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

This table defines our human Aristotelian concept of *and*, stating that the compound sentence: *p* and *q* is true, and only true, if *p* and *q* are independently true. However, if we project this precise logical meaning of *and* upon a more comprehensive three-valued pattern of rationality three different meanings of *and* do emerge. One which represents the robot concept of *and* ($^{\bullet}$), a second ($^{\bullet\bullet}$) which reflects the seetee meaning of *and* within the robotic mentality, and finally a third concept of conjunction ($^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}$) which mirrors the way by which the three-valued logic computer interprets our human meaning of *and* within his trinitarian system.

AT THIS point I should like to warn the reader again (as I did in the third article of this series) not to try to "think" the three different meanings of *and* as demonstrated in the following truth-table. This is psychologically as well as logically impossible. What the following table shows is the mechanical truth-pattern of a three-valued robot-brain.

Our own mentality is not three-valued, and if it were, we would not need a thought translator. The situation can be roughly compared to the logical difference between our handling small or very large sums. We can *think* the results of 1+1 or 1×1, but we cannot think 356797351×997310971. If we want to know the multiplication result of the two nine digit numbers we have to resort to a mechanical procedure using pencil and paper. Our three-valued table is nothing else but the governing pattern of some sort of notational arrangement* by dint of which one two-valued (and thinkable) concept is transformed into some other.

p	q	$p^{\bullet}q$	$p^{\bullet\bullet}q$	$p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q$
1	1	1	1	1
1	2	2	1	2
1	3	3	3	3
2	1	2	1	2
2	2	2	2	2
2	3	3	3	2
3	1	3	3	3
3	2	3	3	2
3	3	3	3	3

As we pointed out before (see my article: *The Soul of a Robot*) the first truth-function $p^{\bullet}q$ represents the robotic meaning of *and*. It represents the thinking proper to the mechanical brain. The truth-function $p^{\bullet\bullet}q$ renders the meaning of *and* as it appears in a seetee mind, but projected into a three-valued system. Finally $p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q$ repeats our human concept of *and*, again transposed into a three-valued pattern.

It stands to reason that, in order to operate any of these tables, you need negational operators capable of transforming one value into the next one. For our human-logic this is done by the Aristotelian negation "$\sim$". The following table

p	$\sim q$
1	2
2	1

indicates that if *p* has the value 1, then $\sim p$ (non-*p*) has the value 2, and vice versa. This operator is sufficient to handle the two-valued table. However, it is not comprehensive enough to operate the full range of a three-valued table. It cannot perform the step from value 2 to value 3. Our preceding article has therefore introduced a second negation and we will repeat it here for greater convenience.

Its symbol is $-$ and its operational power is defined by the matrix:

*For the suggestion that many-valued truth-tables could be interpreted as arrangements of notational position of originally two-valued truth-functions I am indebted to John W. Campbell, jr.

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p	$\sim' p$
2	3
3	2

This is a strictly contra-Aristotelian negation. We humans cannot perform (think) it. It is part of the hypothetical mentality of a mechanical brain and it indicates the alien thought-processes of a seetee-mind. However, even if we do not use it for our own subjective thought-procedures, we can calculate with it and find out how the mechanical brain translates our concept of *and* into the conjunction of the seetee mind and, by a reversal of that process, transposes seetee ideas into human concepts.

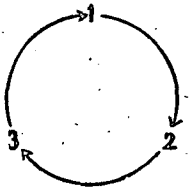
THIS is first done by combining the two independent negations into one three-valued table. We notice that $\sim$ does not operate the value 3, and $\sim'$ leaves the value 1′ as it is. The comprehensive table has therefore the following appearance:

p	$\sim p$	$\sim' p$
1	2	1
2	1	3
3	3	2

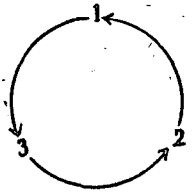
We have written the values which remain invariant with one negator or the other in italics. Now, look again at the table of the three conjunctions in the mechanical brain. You will find that our human conjunction differs from the seetee concept in *all three* values. That means: one *or* the other negational operator is not enough to effect a transformation of our meaning of *and* into the corresponding meaning of the seetee-world. We shall have to combine both into one single operation. This can be done in two ways. So far we have attached our negations only to positive p. From now on we shall prefix them to our two negated p's. By doing so we obtain the table

p	$\sim(\sim' p)$	$\sim'(\sim p)$
1	2	3
2	3	1
3	1	2

The meaning of this table is that the mechanism first superimposes our thought-process $(\sim p)$ upon the negational pattern of the seetee mind $(\sim' p)$ and then reverses the situation by starting from our mental range thereby superimposing the alien pattern of $\sim'$ upon our Aristotelian $\sim$p. Each of these two steps results in a rotational shift of all three values—as seen from positive p. Let's take the first step from p to $\sim(\sim' p)$! The table shows that value 1 becomes 2. Then 2 shifts to 3, whereas 3 turns into 1. Instead of representing two independent alternatives between 1 or 2, and 2 or 3, the relation of the three values to each other represents a cycle that turns "clockwise" relative to the value-position of p.



The inverse step established by the negational procedure $\sim'(\sim p)$ results in a "counter-clockwise" shift of the values relative to p. That is: from 1 to 3, from 3 to 2, and from 2 back to 1.



These two rotating wheels which effect an alternative shift of the three values represent the very mechanism of a thought translator.

This seems to be a brand new idea! Well, maybe for cybernetics—but not for Lewis Carroll! Let's get back to the story of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. After having received her lesson about

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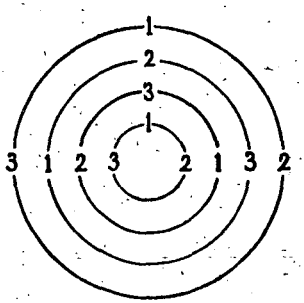
what logic is, Alice looks at the twins, points her finger at Tweedledum, and says, "First boy." But Tweedledum protests with: "Nohow!" When Alice, passing on to Tweedledee, says, "Next boy," Tweedledee shouts his usual "Contrariwise!" The meaning is obvious: there is no preference between the two, as there can be no preference between an Aristotelian and a contra-Aristotelian way of thinking. But quick-witted Alice gets the point. Consequently, when asked to shake hands she knows she cannot shake hands with either of the twins first, and—so the story continues—"as the best way out of the difficulty she took hold of both hands (each of the twins proffered one) at once: the next moment they were dancing around in a ring." After four rounds they left off. "Four times round is enough for one dance," Tweedledum panted out.

CARROLL has probably chosen the number four for the following reason: you can effect any circular shift of three values by going around in one direction. But when you return to your original position, four "rings" are established. The following figure will demonstrate it:



After the original position has been re-constituted there is no more reason to go "around in a ring." Now Alice and the Tweedle-twins are figures in a story. This article, on the other hand, deals with problems of logic. We shall therefore retain for technical reasons both value-shifts, to the left as well as to the right, because we are now ready to analyze the basic principle of thought-translation. The mechanical brain which rotates the values—this is an operation neither our Aristotelian nor the contra-Aristotelian seetee mind can perform—recognizes the fact that both parties, ourselves as well as the aliens, do our thinking in strict alternatives. The first alternative oscillates between 1 and 2, and the second between 2 and 3. But as these alternatives are mutually exclusive and do not overlap, no common ground of communication is possible between them.

The thought translator, however, transforms these two separate and mutually exclusive alternatives of the Aristotelian and the contra-Aristotelian mind into one, and only one equally strict alternative by rotating the three values either "clockwise" or "counter-clockwise."

The machine produces, so to speak, its own alternative logic of two "values." Only the new "values" are now no longer the individual values 1, 2, and 3, which we have used before, but the two opposite rotational shifts. These shifts partake necessarily in the human as well as the seetee range of thought at the same time. Therefore they permit the translation of human concept into the corresponding seetee meaning and also the other way round. We shall demonstrate this now with the help of the meanings of the conjunction *and*. In doing so we shall indicate the "clockwise" rotation by the new symbol $R^{\rightarrow}$ and its reversal by $R^{\leftarrow}$. It is then possible to translate the seetee-concept of *and* ($p^{\bullet\bullet}q$) into the corresponding human reasoning ($p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q$) by the formula:

$$p^{\bullet\bullet}q \equiv R^{\rightarrow}(R^{\leftarrow}p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}R^{\leftarrow}q)$$

and the seetee intelligence will discover our meaning of *and* by using the inverse formula:

$$p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q \equiv R^{\leftarrow}(R^{\rightarrow}p'^{\bullet\bullet}R^{\rightarrow}q)$$

Let us see how this is done! We shall use as an example the first of the two formulas. A seetee intelligence says: *and* ($p^{\bullet\bullet}q$), and the thought translator tells us: what the alien thinks is equivalent

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to the expression: $R{\rightarrow}(R{\leftarrow}p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}R{\leftarrow}q)$. Remember that this symbolic figure contains only our concept of conjunction. Even so it is not immediately readable for us because the information conveyed to us by the mechanism of the robot-brain is still couched in terms of a three-valued language. In order to understand it we have to reduce it to a two-valued expression. The following table will help to do this:

three-valued	two-valued
$p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q$	$p^{\bullet}q$
$R{\rightarrow}$	$\frown$
$R{\leftarrow}$	$\frown$

In our two-valued logic there is only *one* conjunction $p^{\bullet}q$ and as the Aristotelian system contains only *one* value-shift, the classical negation $\frown$, *all* three-valued negations, no matter what form they have, are reduced to it. Therefore the robotic expression

$$R{\rightarrow}(R{\leftarrow}p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}R{\leftarrow}q)$$

is now reduced to

$$\frown(\frown p^{\bullet}\frown q).$$

The next table shows us what this final formula means and how we obtain its truth-value:

p	q	$\frown p$	$\frown q$	$\frown p^{\bullet}\frown q$	$\frown(\frown p^{\bullet}\frown q)$
1	1	2	2	2	1
1	2	2	1	2	1
2	1	1	2	2	1
2	2	1	1	1	2

We first write down the values of positive p and q. In column 2 and 3 we have them negated. In column 5 we establish the conjunction of the negated values. In order to do so either look up the table for *and* on page 5 or just remember that *and* has the value 1 (true) only if both the conjugated concepts have the value 1. The final column, then, results from the negation of column 5. It gives us the final result of what our thought translator has conveyed to us, when we demanded to know what the alien means when *he* uses the term *and*. As we see, the answer boils down to the following juxta-position of meanings—expressed again in a table:

p	q	Aristotelian *and*	Contra-Aristotelian *and*
1	1	1	1
1	2	2	1
2	1	2	1
2	2	2	2

The contra-Aristotelian meaning of *and*, however, is our terrestrial meaning of *or* (inclusive). Because *or* is always true if at least either p or q are true. It is only false in one case—if p and q are both false. I shall leave it to the reader to test the formula.

$$p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q \equiv R{\leftarrow}(R{\rightarrow}p^{\bullet\bullet}R{\rightarrow}q)$$

with the same procedure. This formula is the answer which the thought-translator would give to a seetee-person, if he (or she) inquired which concept is hidden behind the expression $p^{\bullet\bullet\bullet}q$. The result would exactly parallel the one we have given above. He (or she) would also arrive at the conclusion that conjunction and disjunction exchange places if we switch from an Aristotelian to a contra-Aristotelian mentally, and vice versa.

LET me conclude this series by showing how you can make a crude model of something that works like a thought-translator. You require only a small mirror and a certain amount of imagination. First write down your value-sequences for conjunction and disjunction in a horizontal line from left to right. But instead of using the words "true" and "false" or the numbers "1" and "2" use some indifferent symbols like ■ and ○. Here it is:

■ ○ ○ ○

■ ■ ■ ○

Then turn your paper with the squares and circles away from you (180 degrees) and step before a mirror. Then look at the reflection of your value-sequences in the mirror. In order to interpret properly what you see, you now need a bit of imagination. For

(Concluded on page 108)

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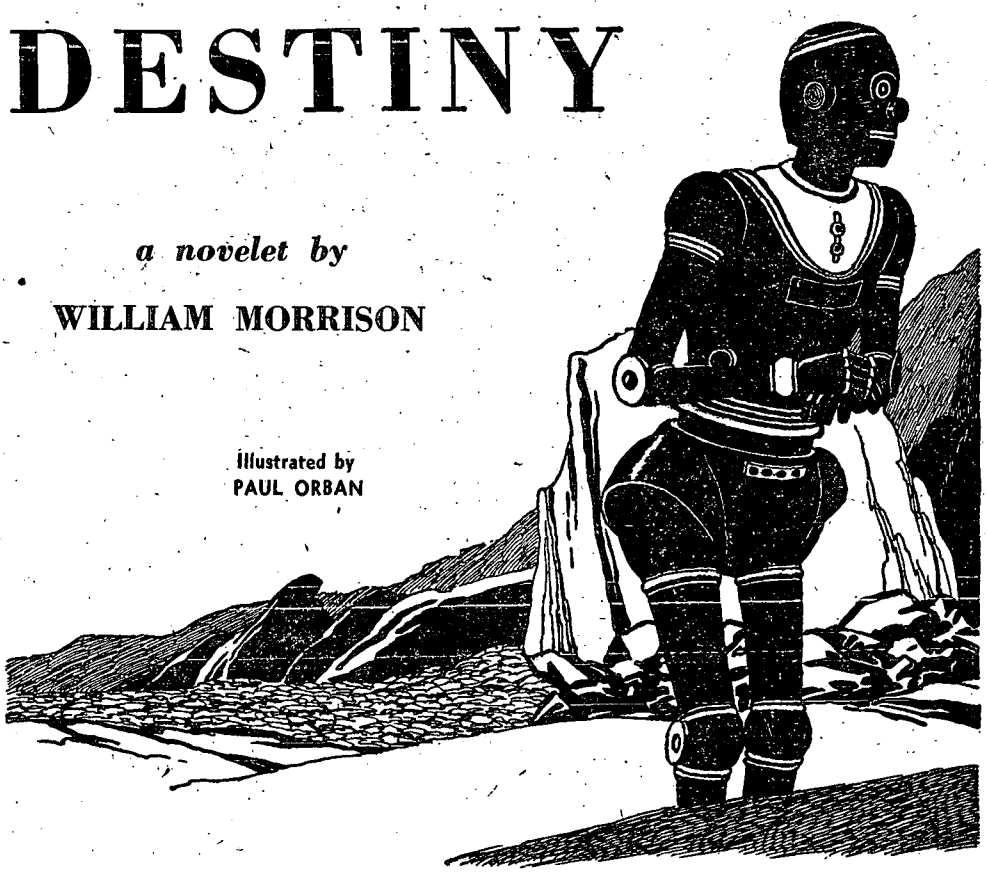
DARK DESTINY

a novelet by

WILLIAM MORRISON

Illustrated by
PAUL ORBAN



I

The Colonel Comes to Dinner

JUST before she let go of the arrow, and the bowstring straightened with a twang, Susie Mae had a terrifying thought: "What if the sun were to explode and everything were to come to an end *this very moment*—before we could eat the beast?"

She needn't have worried. The arrow shot away too slowly, and the shadowy gnula was too quick. Besides, her aim hadn't been accurate enough. The hunk of dark animated fur ducked behind a rock, and the shaft clanged harmlessly on one of the stones, the arrowhead drawing pretty sparks. The sun was still there, glaring down at her, and the beast wasn't going to be eaten at all.

"Oh, dear," said Susie Mae, "there goes the protein for today's dinner. If only we had good bowstrings."

For ten years they'd been castaways in space, but

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The Colonel said, "How are you, Susie Mae?"

She trudged wearily over to the rocks and looked for the arrow. The arrowhead had been shattered as it sparked, and several hours would be needed to fit another one. All in all, a discouraging day.

The landscape was bare and rocky, not at all the kind of landscape she had known as a child. At its best, the sun was even hotter than the old sun, and right now, in its Blue Period, it was intolerable. It was terribly strong in ultraviolet, and it could burn you in a minute if you weren't used to it and let your skin be exposed. And it was like a dagger in your eyes if you made the mistake of looking at it. A miserable place, a miserable existence, she thought.

It was made more miserable at the moment by a meeting with old Colonel

the Colonel still kept dreaming of the Old South!

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Waters, who was out for a short walk with his black-faced robot Philip in attendance. In the old days, the Colonel's hat would have swept off his head almost of its own volition at the sight of a lady, even though the lady was his own adopted granddaughter, and wore a robe of ragged gnula skins. Other suns, however, other customs. The hat stayed on, but the Colonel said, "How are you, Susie Mae?"

"I'm fine, Colonel. I hope you're feeling well."

"I have no complaints," said the Colonel gravely. Actually he had dozens of them. But now was no time to express them. Not when greeting a lady. "We dwell in the shadow of a blue destiny, my dear. Is it any wonder that our lives are overcast?"

"No wonder at all," agreed Susie Mae.

"It is a sobering thought to realize that in the midst of life we are in death. What mortal can tell which moment will be our last? Just think of it, Susie Mae. In the twinkling of an eye, this most unfriendly sun of ours may display its full hostility—"

Susie Mae didn't want to think of it. For one thing, it made her sick, and for another, she knew that the Colonel was in that flowery mood of his which could make endless conversation. "You'll excuse me, I'm sure, Colonel," she said, and patted herself on the back for being so polite. "I have to get home and prepare dinner."

"Of course we'll excuse you, my dear. The demands of the inner man must be heeded, mustn't they, Philip?"

"Yassuh, Marse Henry, whatever you say, suh."

Susie Mae hurried on. The Colonel and his Philip were unique. Among the three hundred people in this colony you wouldn't find a duplicate of either of them. It's just as well, she thought. One of the Colonel's kind is all I can stand.

She reached the hut, and with a set of lenses began to build a broiler. Let us hope, she thought gloomily, that there will be something to broil. I hate to see the kids go hungry. Rubio and I never should have had children. They're nice kids, lovable kids, but this is no place for them or anybody else to be born. This is a place where it's best to give up. So what if the race does die out here? There are other planets where human beings still live and have children.

BY THE time the broiler was ready, she heard the pattering of skin-shod feet outside, and a moment later, Arturo, her oldest, raced into the hut, holding a small black animal up by the ears. A gnula! The same kind of animal she had missed.

"Where did you get it, Arturo?"

"Hit it with a rock." He grinned bashfully. "Guess I was lucky."

"You weren't lucky. You have a good aim."

"Guess Pop will be glad to see that."

"We'll all be glad."

She looked at her ten-year-old son, and felt a sudden glow of pride. He was small and skinny, but he was tough, and for his age remarkably resourceful. The other three, down to three and a half year old Ranse, were also growing up to be self-reliant and able to take care of themselves. They didn't worry about the sun, in its Red or Blue Periods. They never even thought of the possibility of their world exploding. Nor did they regard their existence as miserable. They simply enjoyed it. As much, she told herself, as she had enjoyed that long-gone sheltered childhood of hers.

She sighed and thought of how nice it might have been if they hadn't crashed. Or if Earth could possibly have learned where they were and renewed its contact with them. But Earth couldn't, of course. The shipload of colonists had been destined for a planet in the Sigma Alpha Sector of the Horsehead Nebula. How would any one back on Earth suspect that their instruments had gone wrong, and that they had blundered into Rho Beta Prime? In this glorious twenty-first century, instruments were never supposed to go wrong.

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The trouble was, thought Susie Mae, that for every giant step forward there had been a step back. The achievement of interplanetary travel had aroused demands that science come to a halt altogether. And when a mere half century later Man had made the amazing leap from the planets to the stars, there had arisen a great cry: "We're going too fast, too far! Back to the good old days!" Each man had his own idea of the good old days. For Colonel Waters, her grandfather, they were symbolized by mint juleps and magnolias, and by horses, hounds, and historic ancestors—creatures he had never known except in an imagination which had transmuted them into synthetic memories. As a colonist, he hoped to have his own little preserve, modeled after the Old South.

Rubio was one of the few who had no use for good old days. He looked forward and worked only for the days to come. He and Susie Mae had been married on the ship itself—against the Colonel's wish—just before the crash, when the prospects for a long married life were highly unfavorable. Who'd ever have thought it would last through four children? If only Earth had learned where they were! If *only*—

RUBIO, she realized, was so preoccupied with his research that it made little difference to him what planet or satellite he lived on. And the children, poor things, knowing of nothing better, accepted what they had. But to an adult less detached than a scientist and who had known the comforts of civilization, this place was hell.

What, she asked herself, was there to hope for? She had looked around for her answer and the planet had been silent, or had answered in the wrong way. With wretchedness and discomfort, with broiling heat and stabbing light, with meager food and much discouragement. And with the ever-present threat of death from the variable sun.

As for that future that Rubio always talked about—she thought back to what she knew of the history of Earth, with its endless wars and famines and epidemics, to the mass misery the human race had suffered, the scourges it had been forced to survive to reach its present state. And the idea that she and her children would have to go through all that again on this new planet frightened her. They were like that man in the old myth who had been condemned to push a stone up the side of hell. Every time he got near the top the stone slipped, and he had to begin all over again.

It was odd that the thought of beginning over again hadn't frightened Rubio. Her husband, poor fool, believed that the few human beings here would remember what the parent race had learned and wouldn't repeat the same mistakes. Assuming, that was, that they ever got a chance to make them. There had been little he could salvage in the lifeboat—neither the ship's library, nor chemicals, nor equipment. But in the moments of panic, by great luck, he had spared a thought from his new wife, and remembered to take with him the most precious objects he could think of—several handbooks containing lists of important constants.

The most valuable material of all, however, was that which remained in the human brain. The moment the shock of the crash was gone, the moment the survivors got it through their heads that the space ship itself had been burnt and all its equipment was lost to them, Rubio spurred them into action. He persuaded them, for fear of forgetting, to write down all the scientific information they had ever acquired. It turned out that men of his own kind had amazing amounts of knowledge in their heads, knowledge that formed the basis for a revival of science.

Given the knowledge, it wasn't so difficult to make new equipment to create new laboratory supplies from the rocks and soil, from the scattered plants that grew here, from the occasional animals they caught. Tedious work, wasteful certainly, and in many ways crude. Much of the old equipment wouldn't be duplicated for decades. But they could

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make some of the things they needed to tackle the major problem that faced them—how to improve their lives.

HER thoughts were cut short by Colonel Waters, who entered the hut as if it were his own, caught sight of the dead gnula, and smiled. "I see, Susie Mae, that the traditions of our famous hospitality still hold sway in this happy household," he said. "That will make a fine addition to our evening meal."

"Arturo killed it with a rock."

"Ar—Arthur is a clever young lad."

"My name is Arturo," said her son.

"Arthur, in a more civilized manner of speaking," said the old man blandly. "Did I ever tell you, Susie Mae, that I was quite a hunter when I was a lad Arthur's age? Used an old-fashioned rifle, of course, but I could hit a possum with it at five hundred yards."

The old liar, she thought. The old fool. Or maybe we're the ones who are fools. He's the only one around here who doesn't lift his hand to do a stroke of useful work. He and his Philip, whom he keeps dancing attendance on him. Even Ranse puts him to shame. What do we feed him for? What's the sense of straining ourselves to keep a parasite like him alive?

The other kids came running in, yelling, and Susie Mae turned toward them to give brisk orders. "Ranse, you go get some of those big leaves for plates. Ella, you set the table. Dolores, you prepare the palay fruit, and make sure all the seeds are out. We don't want Ranse to swallow another one and get sick the way he did before. Arturo, you stay with me and give me a hand at skinning that gnula."

The hut became a beehive of activity. And at one side, sitting at his ease while the workers kept busy, the old drone, as she thought of him, beamed at every one and said, "This brings back pleasant memories, Susie Mae. I remember how we used to do things on the old plantation. Ah, that was the truly Golden Age. The age of the lady and the gentleman. A master and a mistress who kept things in order, slaves and servants who knew their places—yes, we were all happy then. The world will never see such happiness again."

Susie Mae gave an unladylike snort, and ripped a stone blade down the side of the gnula. And the voice buzzed on.

The animal was broiled almost to a crisp by the time Rubio came in. Colonel Waters insisted on standing up and shaking his hand, just to show that he had no prejudices, Susie Mae supposed, and Rubio went through the ceremony without enthusiasm. He despises the old man, she thought. He despises him almost as much as I do. And besides, he's tired.

She went over to Rubio and kissed him. She noticed as she did so that the old man turned his face away in order not to see this disgraceful spectacle. He might greet Rubio with hypocritical cordiality, he might live on the backs of Rubio's family, but he still couldn't force himself to accept the fact that a granddaughter of his, a descendant (by adoption) of the Waterses of Virginia and the Davises of Georgia, had married a foreigner so far beneath her. A man whose very name betrayed the inferiority of his origin, a man who looked perpetually sunburnt. Although under this damnable sun, no more burnt than any one else.

"Have a good day at the laboratory, dear?" asked Susie Mae.

"We're getting along," said Rubio. "The one thing that's holding us up is a little matter of calculations."

"Those silly calculations are a waste of time! What good will it do us to *know?* What we need is better bows and arrows, and slingshots, and other weapons we could use against the animals."

Rubio said curtly, "We're not wasting our time. Don't you see, Susie Mae, this pulsating variable sun of ours is the most important factor in our lives. And there *is* the danger of its exploding."

"In the midst of life—" began the Colonel sonorously.

"Save it, Colonel. From our observa-

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tions during the past few years on the Blue and Red Periods, we should have enough data to estimate solar stability. Once we knew that, we wouldn't have to worry whether every moment would be our last. We'd be able to consider things more calmly, to plan ahead. Unfortunately, each month's observations require about a year of calculation. Too bad we couldn't save the ship's automatic navigator."

"I don't see—" began Susie Mae.

"The ship's navigator was a vast calculating machine. Don't be so slow-witted," said Rubio irritably.

At this insult to his adopted granddaughter Colonel Waters looked grim. "Some people," he observed, "are no gentlemen. They are not gentlemen at all. They lack respect for womanhood."

"And for Colonelhood," said Rubio affably. "By the way, my dear, I see that we have a gnula for supper."

"Arturo caught it."

"Good boy, Arturo. A solid chip off the old block. I imagine you skinned the beast before broiling?"

"Of course."

"Don't. In future, broil in the skin. And don't get it too well done."

"But how will it taste with the fur on?"

"Remove the fur just before eating, and the meat will taste fine. We've tried it at the lab."

"Are there more vitamins that way?"

"Something like that."

"Well, if you say so," said Susie Mae. "Dolores is the palay fruit ready?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Then let's start eating. No, Colonel, my husband sits at the place with the biggest portion, if you don't mind. Or even if you do."

"But, my dear, courtesy demands—"

"Never mind courtesy, Colonel. He works hard, and he needs the food. Just do as I say. And don't grab, Colonel. If even one person tries to stuff himself, there won't be enough to go around."

"Anybody caught stuffing himself," said Arturo, "will get thrown out on his ear and miss meals for a week."

"Worse than that," said Rubio. "He'll get put to work. Colonel, I'm looking for—a job for you. Something you'll be able to handle. What would you suggest?"

The Colonel, with a look of injured innocence, made no reply to this distasteful jest. He merely sat and began to eat.

II

To Populate a Planet

WHEN they had finished eating, the Colonel took himself off. They had once tried making him wash the dishes, but the breakage had been appalling. The Colonel, whether through an inborn lack of ability or a calculated shrewdness, managed to mess up everything he touched. He was definitely unemployable. And this made Rubio's remark about him seem all the more absurd.

Susie Mae did the few dishes herself, with Rubio helping. Near the end, he said, "I'm going to have a surprise for you in about a week."

"Something useful?"

"I think so."

"Well, don't keep me in suspense."

"Why not? A man should always keep his wife in suspense."

"Let me see," said Susie Mae reflectively. "What other women are there around here?"

"No one half as good-looking as you, dear," said Rubio tactfully. "Besides, they have nothing to do with the surprise. It will be something that will make a considerable difference in our way of living. In our moment-to-moment existence."

"Does it," she asked, "have anything to do with Jack Stevenson's experiments on ESP and TK? Telekinesis, or whatever it is?"

He smiled. "Not a thing, Jack's been sitting there in his place, trying to shift the spots from one card to another by the power of thought. He's seen plenty of spots moving around in front of his eyes, but not the right ones."

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"You'll see stars in front of your eyes if you don't tell me what you're talking about."

He grinned at her, and then relented. "You're aware in a general way of the work I've been doing," he said. "Why don't you guess?"

"You know that I don't understand a thing about chemistry. And you're a—a physiological chemist."

"Right."

"How can that possibly help us? Wait a minute—I have it! Teleportation!"

"Come again?"

"You use some chemical and dissolve us up into little molecules or atoms, or something, and these combine again somewhere else. And there we are."

"Not quite. Ever hear of metabolism? That's what I'm working on. And those calculations about our sun. Once we finish those, we'll have a new life."

"A better one?"

"A much better one. What can be more important than new hope for the future?"

"Don't try to fool me. There isn't any hope, and we haven't any future."

He said sharply, "Stop pitying yourself. I can see a future that will put our past to shame."

"Are you building a magic crystal, dear?" And then she said, "I'm sorry, Rubio. I shouldn't try to be sarcastic. It makes me sound silly. It's only that after our experience on this God-forsaken place I feel so hopeless."

"It's been a tough experience, but not a dismal one. We're keeping up our numbers pretty well. We're even increasing."

"Our numbers—three hundred people against a planet! It's absurd."

Rubio said dreamily, "Have you ever seen those calculations of the number of progeny a single pair of animals can have? A pair of flies, fish, rabbits, or other animals could have covered the old Earth in a period of time ranging from a few months to a couple of hundred years. Human beings can be fairly prolific too. Say each couple has ten children. That isn't a tremendously big number, and we know enough about medicine now, and have enough equipment, to keep both the children and their parents alive. That multiplies the population by a factor of five for each generation, assuming that the old generation no longer counts. Four generations, let us say, per century. At the end of two centuries we'll number over a hundred million. At the end of three we'll be taking steps to keep the population down. Don't worry, dear about being too few. Our real job is to find larger quarters."

"You have it all worked out, haven't you? Ten children per couple—what do you think a wife is?" asked Susie Mae indignantly.

"A very useful thing to have around the house."

"A *thing?* Useful, am I? Well, you're not getting any ten children out of me."

"Let's talk it over, sweetheart. The dishes are done, Ranse and Ella are asleep, and the other kids will be dozing off soon. It's rather crowded in here. Let's take a walk in the moonlight and apply our minds to the subject."

"Don't you go blarneying me," said Susie Mae. But she giggled. For the moment, at least, her mood was no longer dull and hopeless.

"Blarney is foreign to my frank and outspoken nature, even though I do have an Irish grandmother."

"I'm too tired to take a walk."

"Fatigue is only a state of mind."

"Well, my mind's made up. I'm not going to have ten children!"

"You'll feel differently later. Take a glance outside. All three moons are up casting a shimmering veil of—what kind of veil does a moon cast?"

Gossamer, I think."

"Whatever gossamer is, they're casting it."

"I think it's spider web."

"Spiders aren't romantic. Gossamer is. Let's agree then, that the moons are casting gossamer veils. When I see how beautiful nature is, I begin to wonder whether we should be satisfied with only ten children."

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"Don't you go getting ambitious," said Susie Mae. "All right, maybe I will take a walk."

"Good girl. Get your genuine gnula-skin coat and put it on to impress the neighbors."

"Neighbors? Do you think we'll run into the Colonel?"

A frown shadowed Rubio's face. "Let's keep this conversation clean," he said. "Romantic, but clean. Have I ever told you my views about sex?"

"Hardly ever," said Susie Mae.

"Good. I have a surprise for you," said her husband.

THE next morning a pair of nesting kuru birds served as alarm clocks. Susie Mae got up, yawning with eyes only half opened, and began to prepare the skimpy breakfast. Rubio smiled at her sleepily. "That's what comes of keeping late hours," he said.

"Look who's talking!"

"I'd rather look at you. Arturo, I want you to come to the lab with me today."

"Sure, Pop. Want me to be your assistant?"

"Right."

"Pop, will you tell me what you're doing? Will you let me be a scientist too?"

"You have my permission to learn in ten easy lessons. Today's lesson will start with grinding up a big heap of marindo leaves."

"Gosh, those things are tough. They're even tough to pull off the bushes. How do you grind them?"

"I've made a gadget, and I'll show you how it works. There's a chemical I get out of those leaves. I'm going to need a fair amount of it before I'm through."

SUSIE MAE was left with the other three children. In order to keep them out of her hair, she set them to work. The hut was small, and their furnishings were few, but there was always something to clean or put in order, and then there was work to do in the garden. Living these days was no occupation for loafers. Excepting, of course, the Colonel.

The Colonel came around while they were working in the garden, and stood there for a moment or two, watching them and beaming down at them. Philip was behind him, keeping at a respectful distance, as he was made to do.

"A pleasant sight to behold," said the Colonel. "Human beings in close communion with Nature. A most pleasant sight indeed. Ah, there were many such sights in the early half of the nineteenth century, the most civilized century known to Man. An era of gracious living, and the cultivation of the true qualities of the gentleman. Perhaps one did not live then oneself, but one can cultivate the same qualities that made the period so notable."

"What's a gentleman?" asked five-year old Ella.

"He's a man what loafs for a living," said Dolores, two years older, and much wiser.

"That about hits it off," said Susie Mae.

"You're facetious, my dear," said the Colonel. "Isn't she facetious, Philip?"

"Yassuh, Marse Henry, she sure am," agreed Philip.

"Why does he always say, 'Yassuh'?" demanded Ranse.

"'Cause he's a robot," said Dolores. "The Colonel got him made to say, 'Yassuh'."

"Why?" asked Ella.

"My dear child, I had Philip created in this fashion as a reminder of the old and happy days. He is the perfect servant, loyal to his master, and proud, in his humble way, of his position as devoted slave. Aren't you proud, Philip?"

"Yassuh, Marse Henry, Ah sure am."

"The human slaves were a surly and ungrateful lot. They didn't appreciate what was done for them. They wanted some absurd thing they called, 'Equality.' But Philip appreciates, don't you Philip?"

"Yassuh, Marse Henry, Ah sure do."

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"Some people thought I was crazy, my dears, to have Philip made at all. He was quite an expensive job, and they told me I was stupidly squandering the money my dear mother left me on a piece of machinery incapable of doing useful work. They were outraged at the idea of my having a robot conditioned to speak as Philip speaks. And perhaps most of all, they were offended by my having Philip made with a black face. Such people, I must say, did not appreciate the feelings of a true gentleman."

Susie Mae ripped up a weed and tossed it aside, over her shoulder. It narrowly missed the Colonel. In fact, a stray lump of dirt from the roots did strike the Colonel's face.

He didn't notice. He said, "The old-fashioned virtues were gone. But here and there, in hearts like mine, faint sparks were kept alive. And now—perhaps the sparks will burst into flame again. For in the desperation of our sad way of life, it has become evident, my children, that to the gentleman it is only the eternal values that matter. To him who possesses true worth of soul, it is only the cause of the human spirit that counts. Of how little avail are material things! Yes, despite our vaunted progress, we are but helpless creatures in the hands of forces far higher and greater than our own."

He paused briefly, and Philip said, "Yassuh, we sure am, Marse Henry."

The Colonel said delicately, "You wouldn't happen, Susie Mae, to have a spare palay fruit?"

"I certainly wouldn't."

The Colonel's eyes wandered over the garden. Susie Mae said softly, "Don't get any ideas, Colonel. We watch this place. Don't try to steal anything."

"My dear, I do protest. You do me an unjustice. It is true that the pangs of hunger gnaw my vitals, but nothing could be further from my mind than to do what you have so crudely suggested."

He paused proudly. Susie Mae said, "You just keep your hands off that fruit, that's all I'm asking."

"Granddaughter, I am disappointed in you. You set too great store by trifles. Come along, Philip."

"Yassuh, Marse Henry."

Looking after them, Ranse asked, "How come, Mommy, Philip calls him, 'Marse Henry,' and not, 'Colonel'?"

"I know," said Dolores quickly. "Dad told me once. It's because he didn't become a Colonel until he got into space. And then he didn't know how to adjust Philip to say, 'Colonel Henry.' An' nobody else would adjust Philip for him."

"Never mind Philip," said Susie Mae absently. "Your father is talking of putting the Colonel to work. I wonder what he can possibly have in mind."

Nobody could venture a plausible guess. "I'll have to get it out of him," said Susie Mae.

As she did so often, she thought back to what Rubio had been talking about. The answer to one of their problems, he had said, lay in metabolism. She had no idea of what he meant by that. Metabolism, in the old days, was something that a doctor measured to find out what was wrong with you. It wasn't anything that could help you live better. It wasn't anything that could help you cope with that fiercely burning sun.

III

Where Is Philip?

THE day was long enough, but her thoughts made it even longer. And when evening finally came, Rubio didn't appear. Arturo came home alone. She could see him approaching over a hill, and she strained her eyes to catch sight of his father behind him, but there was no Rubio. And Arturo was carrying something. When he got closer, she saw what it was. A gnula.

She hugged him. "Have a good time, dear?"

"It was all right. Dad said I was a big help. Look what he gave me."

"You didn't hunt it down yourself?"

"Didn't have time. Dad had it at the lab, but he said he wouldn't need it any more."

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"Did he say he was coming home soon?"

Arturo shook his head. "No, Mom. He said he wasn't coming home at all. Not for a few days."

"Not for a few days? But he can't stay away that long!"

"He says he got to, Mom. He says this experiment of his is important."

"Arturo, I think your father is out of his mind. That laboratory is no place to stay. Where can he sleep?"

"Guess he won't have much time to sleep, Mom."

"And eat? I'll have to bring him supper."

"He says not to worry about him."

"That's silly. Your father has a very good appetite. By tomorrow morning he'll be starved."

"He said they got plenty of gnulas. They can broil them there."

She opened her mouth to tell him what she thought of his father, but closed it again with the words unspoken. No use taking out her feelings on Arturo, she decided. He was only repeating what Rubio had told him. But wait till she saw that husband of hers. She'd give him a piece of her mind then.

Meanwhile there was supper to get ready for herself and the children. And for the Colonel, as his coming into sight reminded her. The Colonel never took a chance of any one's forgetting about his meal.

The Colonel's eyes brightened at sight of the gnula, and he made one of his courtly remarks about the good old days. Susie Mae was so little interested that she didn't even hear him.

The children chattered a little, but Susie Mae was silent, lost in thoughts of her husband. In fact, her vigilance relaxed so far that when the Colonel tried to grab an extra piece of roast gnula, he would have gotten away with it if not for Arturo, who jabbed a fork at his fingers so quickly that the Colonel narrowly escaped being stabbed.

The Colonel's complaints caused Susie Mae to look up, and she said, "Nice work, Arturo. I'm saving that extra piece for your father."

"Ah—is there anything wrong with your dear husband?" asked the Colonel hopefully.

"Nothing at all," said Susie Mae. "He's just working a little late at the laboratory. He'll be home later."

"A fine man, a fine man. A very devoted husband, my dear. A living testimonial to the excellence of your choice."

"You don't have to tell me, Colonel. I've always known it, even if you haven't."

"But, my dear, I've always said so. Haven't I, Philip?"

There was no reply. Almost as startled as the Colonel, Susie Mae turned to look at the robot. But there was no robot.

"PHILIP!" cried Colonel Waters in anguish. "Philip, where are you?"

The lost expression on his face was pitiful to see. "He must have strayed, Colonel," Arturo said.

"He didn't stray. He was built not to stray." The old voice choked. "He was conditioned to remain within the sound of my voice. Philip, you scoundrel, where are you?"

"Somebody musta picked 'im up," Arturo said.

"But that's impossible! That would be theft, and there are no thieves—there are no thieves—" The Colonel's voice faltered again. "Do you think that the ungrateful wretch could possibly have decided to seek *freedom?* But freedom is only a word—to a robot, a meaningless word."

"I still think somebody picked 'im up," Arturo said.

"I shall investigate," said the Colonel, raising his head and looking sternly about him. "If I find that I am mistaken, and that there *are* thieves present among us—there will be grave consequences."

"Nobody wants a slave around here, Colonel," said Susie Mae. "And there are no thieves." Except you, she added mentally.

"I shall give the villain the thrashing

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of his life," said the Colonel grimly. And he marched off, Susie Mae and the children staring after him.

The children started to help her clean up, but they were tired, and she sent them to bed before the dishes were done. Later, with no more work to keep her occupied, she felt restless. Outside, the moons were rising again, but a walk in the moonlight without Rubio along had no appeal. Damn him, she thought angrily, why did he have to do this to me? He should have known I wouldn't be able to sleep for worrying about him. The next time he starts talking about ten children, I'll show him.

She caught sight later of the Colonel wandering around and seeking his lost robot, and for a moment she wondered again what had happened to Philip. But in a way it was a relief not to see him. She had always hated his built-in demeanor of humble slave.

She went to sleep finally, and fell asleep more rapidly than she had thought possible. But in the morning, when the kuru birds began to croak and she turned around and found no Rubio at her side, she woke up at once.

After breakfast had been gotten out of the way, she started the children working in the garden, and said, "Arturo, you take charge. The rest of you do what he says until I come back."

"Where you goin', Mommie?" asked Ranse.

"To see your father. He must be as hungry as a horse." The expression had survived to puzzle the children, although horses themselves had not. "I'm going to bring him that piece of roast gnula."

They seemed a little uneasy as they watched her go, and she felt none too happy to leave them. But nothing would happen to them, she told herself. The kids were all as self-reliant as kids had to be nowadays, and Arturo had almost a grown head on his shoulders.

The laboratory was almost a mile away, and the path was steep and rocky. But she wasn't conscious of fatigue. She knew only that Rubio was doing something reckless and possibly foolish, and that she had to take care of him.

When she reached the laboratory, she found Jack Stevenson, sitting in the outer office and staring at a pack of cards. She said, "Excuse me, Jack. I'm sorry to break your concentration—but have you seen Rubio?"

"What's that? Rubio? Has he gone away?"

"You don't understand. He didn't come home last night."

"He must still be here then," observed Jack brightly, still in a daze from his spell of concentration.

"That's what I figured," she said, and giving Jack up as hopeless, began to prowl through the laboratory. She had gone only a short distance down the corridor, however, when she came to a metal door with a "Do Not Disturb" sign across it.

"Rubio!" she called.

A voice growled, "Shut up out there. Can't you read?"

"I want to speak to my husband."

"He's busy. No interruptions."

"But—"

"He's all right, and he doesn't want you here. Go home and tend to your children."

IN A rage, Susie Mae turned and followed his advice. There was nothing else to do. But she began going over, in her mind, some of the things she would tell Rubio later, when he did get home. A fine husband he was, to put her in an embarrassing position like that.

When she reached the neighborhood of the hut, she heard voices raised. Arturo was saying, "You get out of here or I'll bring this rake down on your head. Go ahead now, get out. Beat it."

The children were grouped together, facing Colonel Waters. She realized at once what had happened. The Colonel, in his gentlemanly way, had tried to browbeat the kids and steal some palay fruit. And Arturo hadn't let himself be browbeaten.

The Colonel, who was facing in her direction, was the first to catch sight of her. "Good morning, Susie Mae," he

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said. "These, ah, these are very fine children you have, splendid children. But somewhat excitable. They seem to be under a misapprehension."

"He tried to steal some palay fruit!" They all started to yell at her at once. "He's a crook, Mommy, a dirty crook!"

"In my day," said the Colonel acidly, "Children spoke to and about their elders with proper politeness and respect."

"He called us dirty little halfbreeds," said Dolores.

"And he said he'd sic Philip on us," added Arturo, "when he found him. Only he ain't found him yet, and besides, Philip ain't that kind of a robot, and he wouldn't hurt us. He'd just stand there and say, 'Yassuh, Marse Henry, yassuh.' But he wouldn't do anything to us."

"Yes, Philip was made to be honest," said Susie Mae. "The Colonel, I'm afraid, was not."

"My dear grandchild—"

"You can skip it, Colonel. I've stood a lot from you, but this is where I stop. When you try to rob and hurt my kids, that's a little too much. I'm afraid you won't be seeing us tonight."

The Colonel was aghast. "My dear child—my own dear granddaughter—"

"By adoption. And I've more than paid for the honor. Don't come around here again, Colonel. There'll be nothing more for you to eat in this hut. Find another soft-hearted fool to take care of you. Or better yet, learn to do some work and take care of yourself."

She tried to cut his protests short, but if there was one thing the Colonel could do, it was complain of the injustices of man and fate. He had his opportunity now, and it was not an opportunity to be lightly thrown away. It took her a good half hour to get rid of him.

After that they worked in the garden silently. When evening came, the Colonel showed up again, but she finally succeeded in turning him away, much as it hurt her to see a man go hungry. The Colonel was brave about it, taking her decision with a noble heroism that put her definitely in the wrong, and with a glint in his eyes that made her sure he would be back later to rob the garden. She would let him, she decided, get away with a single palay fruit, no more. And she would not let him eat with them again.

She slept fitfully, and in the night, as she had suspected, the Colonel came softly into the garden. After he had grabbed his first palay fruit, she launched a stone at him, and he showed unexpected agility in getting away, not ceasing to complain with especial bitterness for lack of a Philip to follow him gravely with that sympathetic, "Yassuh." The moons were clustered together, not actually close to each other in space, but looking close, and gleaming with a brilliance they had never before shown. Or was it that they merely seemed brilliant because Rubio wasn't there, and she wanted him so desperately? Him and his talk of ten children!

IV

The Color of Destiny

THE next five days dragged by in much the same way. The Colonel, still Philipless, had evidently had no success in finding others to feed him, and he obviously thought it beneath his dignity to try to feed himself. He was back several times every day as well as during the night, attempting rather unhopefully to talk himself back into her good graces, and failing that, to steal some food.

The fifth night, as she lay tossing restlessly in her bed, which had always before seemed so narrow and now seemed so frighteningly wide, she heard the door creak. She sat up at once. The door opened, and then softly closed again. She whispered, "Rubio?"

"It's me." And the next moment his arms were around her, and he was hugging her tightly.

She half sobbed, as she said, "I thought you had forgotten all about me. Me and the ten children we were going to have."

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He chuckled quietly. "I don't forget such things."

"What have you been doing?"

"Predicting our future."

"Predicting?"

"And shaping it. We're going to *have* a future. In other words, we're going to keep on living for a while."

"You mean the sun—" her voice rose in her excitement—"the sun isn't going to explode?"

"Quiet, or you'll wake the children. It won't explode for a good thousand years or so. By then our descendants will have space travel, and enough science to tackle the problem as it becomes acute."

"How do you know? Is it that metabolism you talked about?"

"That's something else again. I didn't tell you before because there was a chance that things wouldn't work out right. But they did, beautifully." He paused. "Suppose I start by putting it this way. What's been our biggest curse on this planet?"

She didn't have to think that over very long. "The sun," she said promptly. "Even if we forget about its exploding. In the Blue Period it broils us to death if we aren't careful. In the Red Period, the ultraviolet's almost as bad, and we come near freezing at the same time."

"Right. Have you ever stopped to think how the native plants and animals manage?"

"What difference does it make how they manage? We're not native."

"We're going to become native. Way back on Earth, plants learned how to cope with solar radiation. They absorb it, and convert it into useful energy."

"We're no plants," objected Susie Mae. "Although in the past you *have* said that I was like a flower."

"My little rambling rosebud, shut your pretty petals and listen. Ever hear of vitamin D? Given the right chemicals in your body, you can form it in your own skin on exposure to sunlight. And once formed, it helps your body function more efficiently. The animals on this planet utilize not only vitamin D, but a series of other chemicals, all of them concentrated in the skin. Anti-radiation coenzymes, we call them. Why do you think I advised you to broil gnulas without removing the fur?"

"That's right, you did talk of something like vitamins," admitted Susie Mae.

"Something like. These anti-radiation coenzymes are going to absorb enough ultraviolet to take the curse off it. We'll be able to move in the light without this perpetual fear of being painfully sunburned, sunstruck, or blinded. And we'll absorb enough of the other wave-lengths to form substances that protect against cold."

"All we have to do is broil gnulas with the fur on?"

"For a while, anyway. The precoenzyme—the stuff that turns into the coenzyme—comes from marindo leaves. But our bodies can't utilize it directly. The gnula has to eat it first and change it to the coenzyme before it can do us any good. Later on we may discover plants with materials we can absorb directly. Right now, we just have to eat more gnulas."

"Before we can eat them we have to shoot them."

"That will be taken care of too. And that, incidentally, solves another problem. What to do with our friend, Colonel Waters."

"You've found a job for him?"

"One that he'll love."

Susie Mae was silent. After a moment, she said slowly, "With no fear of the sun exploding, and no fear of the sun's rays—I suppose it does change things. It gives us that hope you talked about."

"You can bet your sweet little life it does. We'll work, build, have children—"

"I rather doubt that," said Susie Mae. "I doubt it very much. I can't imagine us having children if you go leaving me for a week at a time, like one of those ancient traveling salesmen."

"From now on we stick together,

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through Blue Sun and Red." And he reached for her.

THAT night, as she discovered at once after rising, the Colonel stole half a dozen palay fruit. Susie Mae didn't mind. Palay fruit were no longer going to play so great a role in their lives. But it was something of a nuisance to discover the bloated old gentleman himself, snoring in a primitive rhythm as he slept off his eating binge right in their own garden. His face looked as if he hadn't washed in a week, and Susie Mae began to doubt the possibility of his turning into a useful member of society.

The Colonel made a series of sounds in his sleep, half speech half grunts. The word "Philip" was distinguishable.

"I'm afraid that Philip is gone for good," said Susie Mae. "Rubio!"

Rubio had disappeared. He had got up and left even before she had heard the croaking of the birds.

The kids came running out into the garden. "Look, Mom," cried Dolores. "He stole a whole row of fruit!"

The Colonel roused himself and stood up. "Susie Mae, you must forgive the infirmities of an old and much-suffering gentleman. I had no intention of impinging upon your hospitality, had I, Philip?" It took him a few seconds to realize why there was no answer, and he said mournfully, "Dear me, I was forgetting that Philip is gone. The fact is, Susie Mae, that I had every intention of returning to my own house."

"Never mind, Colonel," said Susie Mae. "This time it's all right." She was feeling so happy at Rubio's return that she could be tolerant even of the Colonel. "But don't take any more today, or you'll have a stomach ache." She turned to the children. "We're all going to have a big breakfast today. Your father's back."

The Colonel said, "A fine man, your husband, a fine man—"

And then the words stuck in his throat. A figure rose over the crest of a hill, galloped forward, and came to a stop before them. The Colonel stared, the children stared, Susie Mae stared.

"Are my poor old eyes deceiving me?" stammered the Colonel. "This resembles a steed of the days of chivalry."

"You can call it a horse if you wish," observed Rubio, dismounting from what seemed the section of a tree trunk on four curiously jointed legs. "Slightly mechanical, perhaps."

The children had clustered around and were demanding rides. Ranse was fascinated by the mechanical creature's short furry tail. "None of you will get rides," said Susie Mae firmly, "unless you quiet down. Now, Ranse is the youngest—"

"Hold it, my dear," said Rubio. "The Colonel is our guest. He comes first."

"I, Sir? This is indeed an honor, Sir—"

"No more than simple justice, Colonel," said Rubio smoothly. "As the living repository of the noblest traditions of an epochal era, you are the only one of us familiar with the customs of the chase."

"The chase? I hope I do not mistake you, Sir."

"You do not, Colonel. We are forming a Hunt Club, and it will be an honor to have you serve as Master of the at present non-existent Foxhounds. Of course we have no foxes either, but we do have gnulas."

The children's clamor for rides rose to a crescendo as Rubio helped the Colonel on to the mechanical horse, and showed him how to handle the reins. Then, with a loud and happy, "Yoicks!" the Colonel was off, galloping away in splendor to the sound of bugles which only his old ears could hear.

SUSIE MAE stared after him and burst into laughter that had a touch of hysteria in it. "Oh, Rubio, how nicely you handled him. That's the work you found for him, isn't it?"

"Work? Do not mention that obscene word again in connection with the Colonel."

"Don't worry, dear, I won't. But as

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Master of those non-existent Foxhounds, he'll be our chief hunter, won't he?"

Rubio grinned, and nodded. "All the youngsters will work under his direction. The Colonel will have people to order around. He will not be engaged in menial labor. He will be doing something a gentleman can lay his hand to."

"Rubio, you're so clever I could kiss you. And I would, too—if you'd wash your face."

"My face–is no dirtier than yours," said Rubio. "Didn't you notice what's happened to the Colonel's complexion? Don't you see what's happening to the children's?"

"They seem to be getting darker!" cried Susie Mae.

"Naturally," said Rubio. "It's those coenzymes from the gnula skins. What do you think makes the animals black? Black is the color that absorbs radiation most efficiently."

"We're all going to turn black too?"

"All of us, including the Colonel. Wait till he finds out."

But the Colonel was too happy prancing back and forth on his new steed to think about his appearance. Susie Mae said, "Is that mechanical horse one of the important things you were working on all this time?"

"One of them," admitted Rubio. "Notice those jointed legs. They once formed the legs and arms of a robot called, 'Philip.'"

"So that's what happened to Philip! The Colonel wondered whether he had sought freedom."

"I don't know whether you could call Philip free or not. But, in the military sense of the word, he has been liberated. That is, separated from his former owner, and appropriated."

"Oh, Rubio, that's really stealing. For such an unimportant purpose, too!"

"It isn't stealing, my dear, because we took Philip by a unanimous decision of the laboratory staff. And the laboratory staff is our government. Furthermore, the purpose was not trivial. How do you think we made those calculations I was telling you about last night? A dozen men with paper and pencil couldn't have completed them in a dozen years."

"You used Philip?"

"We used Philip. Do you realize that the robot had a first class electronic brain inside him, doing nothing more important than directing a set of artificial vocal cords to say, 'Yassuh' at appropriate intervals? We removed it and duplicated some of the simpler parts. There's a primitive electronic brain in the horse, to make it obey simple key commands like 'Yoicks,' and twelve other words. We adjusted the original brain to do difficult calculations. We really did set that brain free. From now on Philip directs the work of our colony."

THE Colonel galloped up to them, and dismounted without audible creaks of his old bones. His face was flushed and happy, despite the increasing pigmentation of his skin. "I thank you, Sir," he said with a flourish, actually taking off his hat and bowing low in the depth of his emotion. "I thank you for one of the happiest moments of this worthless old life."

"Worthless, Colonel? Not at all. In future we shall esteem you at your true value."

The Colonel swept his hat back onto his head with a grand gesture. "And I had thought our destiny was a dark one," he said. "I was wrong, Sir, I do not mind confessing that I was wrong. Our destiny is bright, bright as this shining sun itself!"

"How right you are," said Susie Mae. And she went inside to prepare breakfast.

Next Issue: The Angry House, an Unusual Story by Richard R. Smith

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Illustration by ORBAN

WAYFARER

By ROGER DEE

"They call me an idiot and I guess I am. But the voices are real. . . ."

THE moon is shining in through my upstairs window.

It makes a moon-tree on the walls because the big oak outside sifts the light through in patterns of leaves and branches and the patterns move up and down when the oak sways in the wind. It is early warm summertime and nearly midnight and it is wonderful to lie in bed feeling drowsy and watching the moon-tree slide up and down the wallpaper but I can't go back to sleep because Robbie is calling me. I have to go up the mountain and try again to get

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Robbie and the Wayfaring Master who sleeps in the star ship with him out of the water at the bottom of the old bluestone quarry so they can go home.

It is a lot of trouble but I don't mind. Nobody ever took time before to bother with a halfwit like my father says I am, and it is nice now to be needed. Robbie is my friend and I am glad to help him if I can.

A FEW minutes ago I was dreaming about a warm little misty blue world named Khairann that Robbie and the Wayfarers explored once, but old Jeff was barking so loud out in the kennels behind the tobacco barns that he woke me up.

Now that I am awake I can hear Robbie's voice too, calling me from the star ship under the water at the bottom of the quarry. It is just a tiny whisper inside my head but it is clearer than old Jeff's barking and it says, "Wake up, Jamie! You promised to learn the pattern tonight and let us go home again, remember? Hurry, Jamie!"

And now I hear the hounds baying up on the mountain where my father and my brother Ralph are out with flashlights and guns, helping the other men search the woods for Mr. Murtaugh's body. I think at first that Jeff is barking because he wants to be up there too but can't go because he has been acting strange lately and my father thinks he is sick. Then I remember what makes Jeff act so strange and I know he is trying to wake me up on purpose so I'll take him with me up to the old bluestone quarry where the star ship is. Jeff has been acting like this since that night last week when my father and my brother Ralph and our neighbor Mr. Murtaugh were hunting foxes in the woods and the dogs caught one of the Wayfarers by surprise while he was exploring and tore him to little pieces..

That was a terrible thing. I was sick all next day after I saw the funny little foot my father brought home. It had toes all around instead of just in front and it was all sticky with blood that was blue and not red. It was all that was left and my father couldn't imagine what sort of animal it had belonged to and that made him uneasy. The neighbors were uneasy about it too and said there might be more things like it loose in the woods, and when Mr. Murtaugh disappeared last night they thought one of them must have got him and they started looking for his body.

They're wrong about Mr. Murtaugh. I know where his body is but I can't tell anybody because if I did they'd find the star ship and then they wouldn't let Robbie go home again.

They're wrong about old Jeff's being sick, too. Robbie told me on the first night I heard him calling for help from the old bluestone quarry that the reason old Jeff was acting so funny was because the Wayfarer the dogs had killed wasn't really dead.

The Wayfarers built Robbie when they made their star ship, so he knows all about them. They're not like us. They don't have any home and they live forever and travel from star to star just for the fun of seeing what is there and that's why they call themselves Wayfarers. They don't have any bodies of their own, either, Robbie says. They live inside other creatures that aren't as smart as they are but who are glad to share their bodies for life with Robbie's Masters so they can be Wayfarers too.

That's what makes old Jeff act so strange, because when the dogs caught the Wayfarer by surprise in the woods he didn't have time to think the pattern that would set Robbie free to act for himself and to wake up the other Master who was asleep in the big tank they rest in between stars. He had just time enough to get out of his own body and into old Jeff's where he could wait for help. He's out there now making Jeff bark loud to wake me up. I wish he could talk to me the way Robbie does but he can't because Jeff's brain isn't made right. He could talk if he were inside *me* because I'm smarter than old Jeff even if I am a halfwit like my father says.

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Robbie is calling me now. "Hurry, Jamie," he says. "The men on the mountain will find what they're looking for if they come here and drag the water, but they'll find the star ship too. Hurry, Jamie!"

I LIKE Robbie's voice.

It is like the moon-tree that slides up and down my wallpaper because it is quiet and smooth and pretty like music that moves. I like it better than my father's voice or Mr. Murtaugh's or Phyllis Murtaugh's who used to be Phyllis Bascombe when we were little together. But I like my brother Ralph's voice better.

I wish I were like Ralph.

Ralph is younger than me. I used to follow him around everywhere when he was little but when he got bigger he wouldn't let me any more. I said out loud once that God must have been like Ralph when He was young but it must have been a bad thing to say because Ralph said I was a goddamn idiot and hit me.

Ralph is twenty-four and has been to college and he knows nearly everything. Not as much as Robbie knows of course but Robbie isn't human like us. Robbie isn't really alive the way we are but he's been everywhere and seen everything.

But now Robbie is sunk in the star ship under the water down at the bottom of the old bluestone quarry and one of his Masters is asleep in the big between-stars tank and the other one can't think the pattern that will let Robbie act for himself, and Robbie is calling me to come and help.

"You *must* learn the pattern tonight," Robbie is saying. "Hurry, Jamie!"

So I get out of bed and put on my clothes and go downstairs like I have done every night since last week. But tonight the house is empty so I don't have to sneak out because my father and my brother Ralph are out with the search parties on the mountain looking for Mr. Murtaugh's body.

Everybody is wrong about what happened to Mr. Murtaugh, but that's because they can't hear Robbie calling for help. Grown-up people can't hear him, only children and me. And grown-ups never listen to what children and half-wits say.

I wish I had been there that night when the dogs caught the Wayfaring Master in the woods. I'd have made them let him go and none of this would have happened. But I wasn't there so now I have to go up the mountain and try again to learn the pattern that will set Robbie and the other Master free. Robbie is calling me.

So I say, "I'm coming, Robbie," inside my head the way Robbie and I talk to each other, and I run from the house past the tobacco barns and the stables and the kennels toward the quarry on the mountain.

THE horses nicker when I run past their stables in the moonlight because they know my smell and they like me. I run past the kennels and old Jeff stands up against the fence and digs at the wire because he wants to go along. All the animals like me because I understand them and like them. I wish I understood people as well because then people would like me too, but people are different. They laugh or turn their faces away. Phyllis used to like me when we were both little and her name was Bascombe, but since we grew up and she married Mr. Murtaugh she turns her face away and it hurts.

Phyllis likes my brother Ralph better. I used to see them walking in the woods often when Mr. Murtaugh was away from home.

Old Jeff whines at me through the fence and I stop to pat him on the head before I remember about one of Robbie's Masters being inside him. He looks at me with his ears and tail hanging limp and funny like he isn't used to them and he looks at me with eyes that are round and steady like a man's.

"Do you want to go too, Jeff boy?" I ask and Jeff jumps so hard against the

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fence that he tears his nose and it bleeds a little. So I let him out of the wire run and he limps along beside me up the trail toward the graveled county road that leads to the old quarry.

It is nice here in the woods at night with the moon shining on the white dogwood trees and the wild lilac smelling sweet on the air. All the birds are asleep but the owls and a few whippoorwills, and now and then I see a coon's eyes shining at me from the shadows. I would like to stay all night in the woods listening and watching and smelling but I can't. Robbie is calling me.

I see flashlights bobbing through the trees away down the mountainside. I hear hounds barking in the night where my father and my brother Ralph are helping look for Mr. Murtaugh's body, but I don't see any lights up near the old quarry.

I hope they won't look up there because if they poke around in the deep water they'll find Mr. Murtaugh down there on the bottom with a big rock tied to his feet. And if they find Mr. Murtaugh they'll find the star ship too, and that would be terrible.

I think old Jeff and the Wayfarer inside him both feel the same way. They don't bark at the other dogs or try to go to them, they just limp along with me as fast as old Jeff can go.

We reach the quarry together.

THE old quarry used to be a busy place when people blasted bluestone rock out of it for the county roads, but it is deserted now because it got too deep and water filled it up full. The water is deeper than a high house and would drown me if I fell into it.

I sit on the edge of the quarry with my legs hanging over and my bare feet touching the water. Jeff lies down beside me and we both pant for breath after our long fast climb.

The moon is shining on the smooth dark water and it is very quiet here because the quarry is too deep and cold for frogs. I can't see the star ship but I know what it looks because Robbie told me. I know about the millions of little wires that run through it and about the shiny little tank up near the front that is the part Robbie thinks with. The cables and coils and tubes and other things are like hands and feet and eyes and ears to him, but the shiny tank is Robbie's head.

It is wonderful inside the ship but there is nobody in it but the other Wayfarer who is sleeping in his big tank. He has been asleep for years and years, Robbie says, while Robbie searched for a sun with planets. He won't ever wake up now unless I can remember the pattern well enough to think it all at once and set Robbie free to take charge of the ship again.

I hope I can remember the pattern tonight but I know I'll miss Robbie terribly if I do and he goes away. I feel lonesome already when I think of that but I'll try.

"Here I am, Robbie," I say inside my head.

"I know," Robbie answers. "Try hard to remember tonight, Jamie. It may be our last chance."

I try, but the pattern is terribly hard to remember.

The moon moves across the sky while I am trying and slides down behind the mountains and the other moon on the water touches the quarry wall and goes out. It is very dark now and so quiet I can hear old Jeff breathing in and out beside me.

"I can't remember it, Robbie," I say.

I want to cry because it is my fault that I can't hold the pattern in my head long enough to think it all at once and that hurts. I could learn it easy if I were smart like my brother Ralph instead of being a halfwit like my father says I am.

Robbie is very patient.

"It isn't your fault," Robbie says. "And you shouldn't feel sorry for yourself, Jamie, because you're more fortunate really than those others you envy. Your people are the strangest we have

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found in thousands of years of wayfaring; to become adult they must sacrifice their young trust and imagination, and prison their stunted spirits in shells of suspicion too strong to break."

I don't understand what Robbie means. I'm a halfwit and everybody knows it. I can't read or do arithmetic. I can't even talk if somebody is angry with me because my tongue gets thick.

"But you can *feel*, Jamie," Robbie is saying. "You can imagine yourself in the place of a dog or a horse or any tiniest bug, and you can understand how that other creature feels and sympathize with it. That's called empathy, Jamie, and it places you closer to the real meaning and beauty that the Wayfarers find in life than your grown-ups can ever hope to be. Think—you wouldn't take your brother Ralph's gun and go hunting, would you?"

I know what he means now and it makes me feel good to know that there are others somewhere who feel the same way I do about that. I couldn't hunt things to hurt them. I know how it feels to be a fox running for its life through the mountains with no breath left in its lungs and its coat torn with briars and burrs and the hounds baying loud and fierce at its heels, and I can't understand any better than the fox can why this has to be when all it wants is to live. I know how it feels to fly up high like the springtime geese with the clean blue air all around and the woods and fields spread out below like a land in a fairy story, and how hard it is to understand why somebody would lie for hours in the cold dark of morning just to shoot me when I flew down to the water to tell the other geese what I had seen.

I am trying now to imagine how wonderful it must be to go from world to world like the Wayfarers do and find every creature understanding and accepting each other instead of hating and turning their faces away from each other the way people here do. And I *can* imagine it. I can't remember the pattern, but I can understand how good it must be to be a Wayfarer.

"The Masters might take you with us if we can escape this prison world," Robbie is saying. "Would you like that, Jamie?"

I THINK at first I would like to go because it would be nice to be understood everywhere I went. I know I wouldn't go, though, because if I did I'd never see Ralph again and I couldn't stand that. I'd miss old Jeff and the horses and the wild shy things that peep out at me in the woods, but I'd miss Ralph worst of all.

But I couldn't go away even if I wanted to because I can't remember the pattern long enough to let Robbie loose. I know that now. One of Robbie's Masters is asleep in his between-stars tank and the other is caught in old Jeff's body and can't think the pattern that would set Robbie free because Jeff's mind isn't made right for that kind of thinking. Nobody but a man could think a pattern like that.

I have to stop thinking now about that. Somebody is coming.

A car has stopped at the entrance to the quarry and somebody is getting out. Somebody else is coming out of the shadows and they blink their flashlights at each other and I see who it is.

One is Phyllis Murtaugh who used to be Phyllis Bascombe when we were little together. The other one is my brother Ralph and he has a gun under his arm. They walk down toward the water where I am sitting with old Jeff and I can hear them talking.

"You shouldn't have come, darling," Ralph is saying. "Suppose someone sees us here together—you know what *that* would mean!"

Phyllis sounds scared. "I couldn't help it, Ralph. I'd have gone mad in that house all alone, remembering . . . I had to see you."

They stop a few feet from me and stand close together for a minute. I move a little to see what they are doing and a loose rock rolls under my feet and

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goes splash in the water.

Their lights blind me. Everything is all confused.

Now I can see again because they have turned off their flashlights and are standing in front of me. Ralph is very angry and I want to tell him I am sorry but I can't. My tongue feels big and thick the way it always feels when someone is angry with me.

"What are you doing here, you goddamned halfwit?" Ralph says.

Phyllis is more scared than ever. Her eyes are big and round and afraid.

Ralph comes closer. "Are you spying on us, Jamie?" he says. "Were you up here last night when—"

Phyllis pulls hard at his arm. They whisper togteher. "I will if I must," I hear Ralph say. "We can't let him go if he knows about Murtaugh."

I know what he means now. Mr. Murtaugh is down there at the bottom of the quarry with a big rock tied to his feet and he is dead and Ralph is angry with me because I know about it. Robbie told me last night what had happened but I didn't know until now that it was Ralph who put Mr. Murtaugh in the water. I try to tell Ralph I didn't want to know that but I can't. My tongue won't work. Robbie is talking to me now and his voice sounds worried.

"Don't tell him that, Jamie," Robbie is saying. "Maybe he'll let you go if he thinks you don't know. Tell him about me and about the star ship, and he'll understand why you're here."

Robbie is saying that because he doesn't want Ralph to be angry with me. Robbie is helping me now to tell Ralph about the star ship. He puts the words into my head and I say them because my tongue isn't thick any more when Robbie thinks of me.

"I came to help Robbie get his star ship out of the water so he can go home," I tell Ralph. "Robbie calls me for help every night but nobody can hear him but me and some children. But I can't get him out because I can't remember the pattern that turns him on again."

Ralph and Phyllis are looking at each other.

"*Star ship*!" Phyllis says. She holds Ralph's arm tight. "Ralph, something *has* waked the Simmonds children every night for a week. Mrs. Simmonds told me . . ."

"Ralph doesn't answer. He kneels down and puts his flashlight under the water and turns it on. The light shines down and down through the clear green water to the bottom.

"He's right, by God!" Ralph says. "Phyllis, there *is* a ship down there!"

IT IS easy to talk now that Ralph believes me.

It is easy to tell Ralph how Robbie called me that first night and how I went up to the quarry to help him but couldn't. I say how nice it is to find somebody who understands me the way I understand old Jeff and the horses. I tell Ralph how friendly and gentle the Wayfarers are and how they like to travel between the worlds just to see what is new and interesting on them.

Ralph and Phyllis look at each other again when I tell about the Wayfarer who was killed by my father's foxhounds and I think they are afraid of what Robbie and his other Master may do so I explain that Robbie can't do anything down there at the bottom of the quarry because the Wayfarer who went out to explore left Robbie shut off so he couldn't move the ship or wake the other Master. I tell Ralph everything except about the dead Wayfarer being inside old Jeff right beside me now, and I would tell him that but Robbie says no. I explain why I call him Robbie, because I can't remember the word he gave me but it sounded like Robert so I call him Robbie because Robbie and Jamie sound good together.

"Robot — Robert — Robbie!" Ralph says. He is looking at Phyllis again and he is not afraid any more. "Phyllis, one of them came out to explore and was killed by the dogs. A robot is in charge of that ship down there, and it's switch-

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ed off and helpless until somebody gives it permission to work again. Do you realize what a find this is?"

It is not cold but Phyllis is shivering. "I don't like it, Ralph! Please, let's go and leave it there. I'm afraid—"

Ralph is shaking her. "You don't understand—that ship will be worth millions when we're ready to raise it, and it's ours. It's the same as treasure-trove, don't you see?"

Phyllis is crying. "No, no, no . . ."

Ralph shakes her again. "You little fool, all we've got to do is to wait until the search dies down and—"

He turns Phyllis loose and looks at me. "If you're afraid Jamie will talk and somebody will check his story and find Murtaugh," Ralph says, "you can forget it. Jamie won't tell."

Phyllis has stopped crying and her eyes are round. "You'd do it, Ralph? To your own brother?"

"I would," Ralph says. "All my life he's been a handicap and an embarrassment to me, the slobbering fool, a weight around my neck. And I can't let him go now—he'd go telling what is down there, and that would be the end of us."

I don't understand what Ralph means because I can't think as fast as Ralph talks. But Robbie knows. "I'm sorry, Jamie," Robbie is saying. "I was wrong after all. Your brother Ralph is going to put you down under the water the way he did Mr. Murtaugh."

I UNDERSTAND now what Ralph means but I can't believe it.

Mr. Murtaugh is dead and if Ralph puts me down there with him I'll be dead too. I won't see old Jeff any more or hear the dogs barking in their kennels or the horses nickering when I pass by their stables. I won't hear the crows cawing any more over the cornfields in the rain or see the little coons blinking their clean shiny eyes at me in the woods at night. But worst of all I won't see Ralph any more and I can't stand that.

It is like dying.

Ralph doesn't want me to live any more. Nobody ever wanted me to live since my mother died a long long time ago, not my father nor Phyllis or anybody. I think now that maybe it will be nicer after all down there with Mr. Murtaugh because it is quiet and calm there and nobody can hurt you.

"You'd better hurry, then," Phyllis is saying. "Someone may come up this way . . ."

Ralph points his gun at me.

Old Jeff stands up and rubs against my knee and I reach down to pat him before I remember about the Wayfarer being caught inside him.

I hear Robbie's voice inside my head. "I'm sorry, Jamie."

"Goodbye, Robbie," I say. "Goodbye, Jeff." I don't say goodbye to Ralph and Phyllis because they don't want me.

I know now that the Wayfarer inside old Jeff will never get home again. He can't go as long as Jeff lives because Jeff is only a dog and can't think a thought like the pattern Robbie has tried to teach me. I could think it, if I had a Master to help . . .

I wish I had thought of that before. But it is too late now because Ralph is pointing his gun at me.

"Not too late if you really want to do it, Jamie," Robbie is saying inside my head. "But hurry, *hurry*!"

I do want to do it. Old Jeff is standing at my knee watching Ralph. Jeff knows what a gun is and what it will do and so of course the Master inside him knows too.

"*Get him, Jeff*!" I say.

Jeff is growling and jumping at Ralph. Ralph is pointing the gun at him now instead of at me and it bangs loud. Old Jeff falls and lies still but his eyes are open and I can see the Wayfarer inside him looking out at me from the body he is losing. "It's all right," I say. "You can have mine."

A strange thing is happening and it makes me dizzy but it is wonderful too. The Wayfarer is inside me and it is like sunshine flooding in through a clean window and filling every crack and cor-

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ner of an empty room. He couldn't get in before, as long as Jeff was alive. He was trapped inside Jeff, and Robbie couldn't ask me to kill Jeff to let the Wayfarer out. I am not afraid any more because the Wayfarer and I are one now and together we can do anything.

The pattern is in my head as strong and plain as a shout, and it is what Robbie has been waiting for. I don't know what Robbie is doing in the star ship, but all at once I can't move and neither can Ralph or Phyllis.

The deep water in the quarry boils and roars and the star ship leaps up from the bottom and hangs in the air so close I can see the little round door opening in its side. There is a soft light inside the ship and I can see the other Master, the one that was asleep in the big between-stars tank. He is awake now and he is helping Robbie.

Something I can't see reaches out from the ship and lifts me up. Now I am standing inside the round doorway of the ship, looking down at Ralph and Phyllis. They can't move but the men coming up the old quarry road toward us can. The men start to run when they see the lighted star ship hanging against the night sky but I know they can't stop us. Nobody can stop us now.

I KNOW this because the Wayfarer inside me knows it. He doesn't have to speak inside my head the way Robbie does. I know what he thinks because we're one person now and we think together. And because we are together I can understand all the things that used to puzzle me.

The sky is getting pink in the east now and that means the sun is rising. I am looking down at Ralph in the early morning light and remembering how I used to worship him. I remember what I said once, that God must have been like Ralph when He was young, and I wonder how I could have thought so.

Ralph looks smaller now and not wonderful at all. He looks like a spoiled vicious little boy who breaks things when he doesn't get what he wants, and I am sorry for him. He and Phyllis can move now, but the men coming up the road will get them because Mr. Murtaugh's body broke loose from the rock and is floating on the surface of the water. I am sorry for all of them down there because they will never see what I am going to see out there with Robbie and the other Wayfarer.

I know what is ahead of me now and it is as wonderful as Robbie said it would be. All the stars in the sky are waiting for us and all the creatures living on the little worlds that swing around them are waiting too, and they are all friendly because there isn't another place anywhere as harsh and cruel as Earth. I am a Wayfarer myself now, and I know.

The other Wayfarer is standing beside me any his thoughts are linked with mine. "Welcome home," he is thinking, because the ship is home to us.

Robbie is all around us like a warm live shell, snug and protective and comforting. The star ship quivers eagerly like a horse waiting for the word to run. We have just a little moment left before the round door closes and we shoot up into the sky.

I use that moment to look out over the green mountains shining in the early sunlight and to remember the dogs and horses and the birds and flowers and the shy little wild things that used to peep out at me from the shadows in the woods at night. The Wayfarer inside me likes the things I remember, because we think together: "They are good things. We'll come back and see them again some day, when the people are all gone."

The round door is swinging shut, hiding the people who stand on the ground with their mouths open. They are all alike now and not interesting or puzzling any more, so my last look is not at them but at the mountains standing green and quiet and cool with dew against the morning.

"Goodbye, little world," I say.

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Illustration by EMSH

The babes are gaping like kids at a sideshow

Miss Stardust

By RICHARD MATHESON

DEAR HARRY:

How are things in the baked bean industry? Cracky good, I trust—as we used to say in those halcyon days of yore when thou and mou were dripping young ichor over our public relations courses at ye olde M.U.

I swan things *should* be cracky good, what with your future intact and paid-for Cadillac. Second-rank publicity man

★

It was a case of beauty and the beast . . . but which was which?

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for *Altshuler's Boston Beauties.* Kid, you're living.

As for me—nothing. I'm on the ropes from this dang *Miss Stardust* contest. I s'pose you've read some accounts of the debacle by our comrades-in-legs, the roving reporters. Well, buddy, the inside tale is still to be wagged. So I'm waggin'. List.

To begin with, as they prose in Victorian ghost stores, I have my little agency, single entrepreneurish and struggling. I have no complaints. There are my steady customers—*Garshbuller's Candied Dental Floss, Los Alamos Insect Bombs, The Blue Underwear Company.* and, but of course, the ever popular *Mae Bushkins Imperial Foundations.* All said clients guaranteed to knock me out a steady if non-stratospheric return.

So what happens? You remember that joker from my home town I told you about once, Gad Simpkins? You know, the one who was going to parachute down a mine shaft? The one who was going to walk tightrope across a burning Bessemer Converter? Sure you do.

What happens but the jerk decides to swim the English Channel backstroke. Damn fool thing to try in any man's book, but that was Gad to the socks. Always one for a new twist.

Well, to cut short the prelims, Gad doesn't know a soul. He's small potatoes, strictly a benchwarmer in the minor leagues. He comes to me. Joe, he says, you got to handle my publicity for the swim. This is dynamite, he says to me. I look him over. Change your brand, I tell him. He retires.

But comes two plot thickeners. For one, *Los Alamos Insect Bombs* is kaput, after one of its larger items blows up a customer's seven-room house and adjoining garage, while he and family are out to the movies.

Result: A—One less client. B—Enough loss to create one wry look on the kisser of my beloved, which says as clearly as if she'd intoned the words in her gravelly snarl: *"Penury! It's upon us!"*

This is the first thing. The second is edging on the subtler side, but still enough to egg me on. I am getting sick of dental floss and foundations and blue underwear. I am tired of catering to torsos and teeth. I want a little magic in my latter days. Besides the fact, as I say, that I covet a little needed jack to improve my low-caste status at Home Sweet Home.

But enough of that. Sufficient to say that I give the job a run for its money. All the tricks of the trade, from squibs to bits of semi-droll fluff in the *New Yorker Magazine.* I get Gad on the radio, he desports like the idiot he is. You know the rest. Good solid publicity, interest snow-balling, project going strong. Is it my fault Gadstone Simpkins swims into a rock twenty yards out from the Gallic shoreline?

SO I toss my greying shock of hair to the side, and am preparing my retreat to blue underwear, when to the house comes a party of three. They are directors of a proposed contest to determine who is to be a certain *Miss Stardust.*

I elucidate, this being the crux of my somber plaint. The winner of this here contest is to be declared best-looking head not only on Earth, not only in the Solar System, but in the whole blarsted galaxy. This includes *beaucoup* stars and this, my skinny info about the heavens informs me, includes the chance of a goodly sum of probable life-sustaining planets. As well as our own nine, one of which we already know contains a strange brand of living matter.

Ergo—mishmosh.

However, at the moment these three talent-seeking gents come to see me, I am not thinking overhard about such wraithlike topics. I know as much astronomy as I know where last years' taxes went. When it comes to supernova and escape velocities, I am on a par with the guy who can lose a bass

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drum in a telephone booth.

This, I hasten to add, disturbs me not one whit. Because the three characters like my publicity work on Gad's ill-fated plunge. I have imagination. I have the fresh approach. I have journalistic *joie de vivre*. Outcome—they want me to handle the *Miss Stardust* contest at a juicy figure (not one of their prospective contestants—a retainer.)

I sign the contract. Hastily. I am now head rah rah man for a setup that determines which babe has the face that launches a thousand spaceships.

So I get hep. I start ladling out the pablum of publicity articles and ads disguised as news. 8 x 10 glossies make the rounds. *Miss Georgia* and *Miss New York* and *Miss Transylvania* and *Miss Hemoglobin* and *Miss The Girl We'd Most Like To Be Trapped In A Cement Mixer With.*

Prizes are announced. A huge silver loving cup. A Hollywood contract. A car. Others. The applications pour in.

Interest picks up. The boardwalk at Long Harbor starts to get prettied up. The judges are picked, five of them. Two are local dignitaries, fugitives from the Chamber of Commerce. One is a Mayor Grassblood on his yearly vacation from Gall Stone, Arizona. Another is Marvin O'Shea, president of a chemical plant. Last and least is Gloober, of Gloober and Gloober, old firm of good repute that turns out bathing suits. (Guess what kind of bathing suits all contestants are going to wear.)

Everything is going cracky good. Excitement fills the air. Drivel fills the columns. Merchants are rubbing their gnarled palms together, oiling up the wheels on their cash register drawers. Middle-aged men are packing duds and combing out toupees to attend the festival. Joy to the world. Everyone is animate. Especially me. I am raking in such matchless coin that I am tempted to slip Mae Bushkin the word to take a flying leap into blue underwear while drawing candied dental floss between the gaps in her bridge. But caution prevails. My wife's middle name. She says you never can tell.

Truer words were never growled.

Because what happens, but three days before the contest starts Mrs. Local Dignitary Number One gets a severe case of galloping undefinable, and ends up in the hospital. Old Man Local Dignitary Number One gets the shakes, cancels his job, and hies to the bedside with roses and condolances A sordid marital gesture, but rough on the contest.

WE REPLACE him with Sam Sampson, who owns five car lots. This is not too bad, because we now sidestep the need to hire cars for the babes to ride around Long Harbor in, and cause all male viewers to wax pop-eyed viewing how little material old man Gloober weaves into his bathing suits.

So we are all squared off again. Until Marvin O'Shea, president of a chemical plant, is driving to see an infirm aunt in La Jolla, when his right rear goes "pow," and he and his ever-nagging go ploughing through the last two cabins of *Mackintoshe's Little Hawaiian Motel.*

The duo is not seriously injured, but both end up in the white place, flat on their backs and sniffing flowers of compassion. That takes care of another judge.

With mutters of "jinx" in our ears we find ourselves yet another replacement. Said replacement promptly gets himself in a drunken street brawl, and we have to ease him out of the picture fast. He screams foul and, true, it does seem undue odd. The joker has laid off the bottle for twenty-seven years. But testimony prevails. It emerges clear that the old gent had enough alcohol in him to light seventeen hurricane lamps.

We make the bid to replace this unfortunate with one Saul Mendelheimer, owner and producer of *Mendelheimer's Garden-of-Eden Pickles.* Mendelheimer acquiesces. We are set again. The machine shudders on.

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Then, the day before the contest is to start, the pier collapses. Luckily no one is on it but Lewisohn Tamarkis, who is arranging floral wreaths. He dog paddles to shore, whilst cursing all living things, and drives off, dripping Pacific Ocean on the seat covers of his 1948 *Studebaker*.

Our brows knit with grave suspicions. Mutters of "Communists" falling from many a furtive lip, we acquire the Municipal Auditorium. This is not so good as the outdoors, but our hands are tied. I for one, being a superstitious crank, think there is a curse operating on the show. I have dealt with such ill-fated projects in my time and, say I, once a deal starts going sour there's nothing you can do.

This *Miss Stardust* contest was accursed, I decided. I didn't know the half of it.

So where was I? Oh, yeah. Well, we finally manage to reach the morning of the show with five breathing, walking judges. The day dawns bright and rainy. First time it rains on that date since 1867. We're all burned. The judges sit in their hotel suite and grouse. Get to the auditorium, I tell them. Then I run around trying to get things rolling.

First I send out sixteen Sampson cars with loudspeakers, and Long Harbor is informed that The Show Will Go On. On top of each car is a broad, gamuting from *Miss Alsace-Lorraine* to *Miss Pitkin Avenue*. They are dressed in flesh-colored bathing suits and transparent raincoats. They hold umbrellas with one hand and wave with the other. They giggle and give the come-on over the mike. If this, plus flesh-colored suits, fails, I will concede all to be over, and will wire Mae Bushkin for a rematch.

Also I send out little boys with handbills. I snatch a few minutes of radio time and get a local happyvoice announcer to give out with a come one, come all. I send up a balloon. *See Miss Stardust Today!!* it says. Someone shoots it down. A prankster, I think.

Not so.

After a morning of hasty relations with the public, I hie to the auditorium for a last confab with the judges. I note that carpenters are still banging away on the judges' booth on stage. A dry Lewisohn Tamarkis and crew are heaving bouquets around. I think, we may get this show on the road yet.

Then it comes.

I step into the elevator and zip up the shaft. I patter down the hallway. I enter the judges' room.

"Men," I say.

And that's all.

Because they are all sitting paralyzed in their chairs, gaping at a thing in the middle of the floor to which my eyes move.

My lower jaw hits the laces on my Florsheims.

EVER see a vacuum cleaner? With a head of cabbage on top? With a jacket on? Standing in the middle of a rug and giving you the eye?

Kiddo, I did.

I am verging on swoon when it addresses me.

"You are in charge?" it inquires.

I do not reply. My tongue is tied. It is strapped. My eyes roll out and bounce on the floor. Nearly.

The thing looks piqued—as much as a head of cabbage can look piqued.

"Very well," he-she-it says, "since no one present seems capable of speech, I shall state our case and depart."

Our case. I feel my skin tightening. We are all riven to our spots. We listen to the mechanical voice of the thing. No mouth is to be seen. Its pronunciation is stilted. It is something like hearing a monologue from that train that says *"Bromo Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer."*

"This contest," it says, "is declared void."

Then, as he looks us over with his one oval yellow eye, I get me a glimmer. In my long years as drudge, rabble

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rouser and savant of the public taste, I have seen many a weirdie in operation.

So I watch this article with sage eyes. I ponder the angle.

"I will elucidate," says cabbage head, "should your silence indicate vacuity of perception. You have, most inappropriately, named this tourney the *Miss Stardust* contest. Since your microbic *Earth*, as you call it, represents no more than the most infinitesimal mote in this galaxy, your choice of contest titling is more than inexpedient. It has been considered noxiously naive and insulting to a serious degree."

Too clever, I thought, too all-fire verbose. Nobody spiels like so except the English Department at Cambridge. This is a-frame, I deduce. Someone is kidding us.

Used to know a guy named Campbell Gault. He made those novelties like joy buzzers and fake spiders and ashtrays that look like outhouses. Old Camp used to make robots too. Once during the war he had a steel Hirohito clanking up old 42nd Street singing *I'm A Japanese Sandman.* Clever, and just the sort of john to play a gag like this.

"Is this understood?" says cabbage skull with a toss of his leaves.

I smile knowingly. I look at the transfixed judges.

"All right," I say, "Let's cut it. We have work to do."

"Sit down," says the thing, "I am not addressing you."

"Go find yourself some corned beef," I say.

"I warn you."

"Bromo Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer," I reply.

I find myself pinned to the broadloom by a bluish ray that buzzes out from the vacuum cleaner. It feels something like when you stand on one of those penny *Foot Easers.* Lots of vibration, and a numbing sensation. But I'm not standing on anything. I'm flat on my back.

"Hey!" I yell, confounded.

"May that strike some reason into you," quoth the vacuum cleaner. "I will now conclude my statement."

The thing rolls around the floor, concluding.

"As I was saying before this intemperate intrusion on my words," he says, "Since your molecular planet is but the minutest portion of the vast spaces which this contest presumes to encompass, we can only assume grave intolerance, and demand retraction."

MAY I . . ." commences Mendelheimer of *Mendelheimer's Garden-of-Eden Pickles,* "May I, ulp, inquire . . . w-w-where you are from?"

"I have just arrived from Asturi Cridenta, as you might call it in your primitive linguistics."

"A . . . a . . . a . . ." Mendelheimer gags.

"An extra-terrestrial!" gasps Sam Sampson, who reads science fiction, between hooking car lovers.

"W-what do you want?"

That's me, a faint squeak in the vicinity of the carpet.

"One of two things," replies the interplanetary vegetable, "A change in the contest title, or representation."

"But . . ." from me.

"I will remind you," says the appliance from outer space, "We have the necessary potency to apply coercion on this body."

"Co-*ercion?*" says Gloober of Gloober and etcetera.

"We have already attempted to disappoint furtherance of this affair," says you-know-what, "but to no apparent avail."

"The accidents," murmur I.

"The pier!" cries Mendelheimer.

"The fight!" Sampson snaps words and fingers.

"The rain," says the vacuum cleaner.

"I *knew* it!" ejaculates Local Dignitary Number Two, "It never rains in Long Harbor unless there is foul play!"

"This is beside the actual point," says our visitor. "Being now aware of our potential effect, judge accordingly."

Outside, rain is dribbling on the win-

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dows. Inside, judges are dribbling on their cravats. I am pale, and fain would conk out. We look at the cabbage, which poses a truculant pose on the rug.

"How d-did you get in here?" asks Mendelheimer.

"Make your decision," states the thing. "You will have the contest title changed, or accord us due representation."

"But, look," I start in, forgetting momentarily my head-to-toe hotfoot.

His eye is on me. I subside.

"We are not here to haggle." The Bromo-Seltzer train rattles angrily over a trestle. "The decision is made. Do not strain our patience."

Public relations to the rescue.

"But, look," I proceed. "We've already got a thousand posters that read *Miss Stardust Contest.* We've advertised that name. We've sold advance-ticket blocks and the tickets read *Admit One* to the *Miss Stardust* contest. Concessionaires have balloons that read . . ."

"Balloons can be punctured," says cabbage head, yet testier.

"You did that," I murmur, *"too?"*

"Enough of this!" bristles the vacuum cleaner from the black velocities. "If you wish to retain your title, then we demand representative rights."

In my true hack mind, Harry, already are wheels turning and buzzers buzzing and little factory workers hustling. The potential spread is before my mental eyes.

SEE MISS STARDUST!! THE BEAUTY OF THE HEAVENS!!! PULCHRITUDE FROM BEYOND THE STARS!!!! THE GREATEST, THE MOST SENSATIONAL.....!!!!

Exclamation point.

"All right," I say, getting the jump on a stunned board of judges, "You've got it."

"Now, *one* moment please." The mayor of Gall Stone, Arizona starts a slow-fission bombast. "This calls for discussion."

"Discussion!" I say, still flat on my back. "What do you want them to do—disintegrate the Municipal Auditorium?"

LOCAL Dignitary Number Two leaps to his brogans.

"No sir!" he cries. "Not the Municipal Auditorium!"

Silence upon the babbling. The vacuum cleaner gives us the Once-over heavily.

"Make your decision," he warns.

So we all nod, pale at the gills.

"Very well," he says.

"How long will it take to get your entry here?" I inquire politely.

"I will inform the member units of the alliance," he tells us, "The entries will be here within the hour."

"Entry-*zzzz?*" I gurgle.

"There are several thousand," he says.

I sag back on the carpeting. I appraise the ceiling and wish I am back plugging the virtues of blue underwear. I envision a stage sagging with several thousand interplanetary broads. I cannot envision the sight of female vacuum cleaners in Gloober bathings suits.

"Thousands?" glups Mendelheimer.

"I note reluctance," says cabbage skull. "Your alternative is the simple act of changing the contest title."

"We're ruined," says Gloober.

The yellow eye softens.

"As a matter of actual point" he says, "I named such a high figure in hopes of forcing you to accept the alternative. However, I see that you cannot. Know then that beyond your own system, our alliance has determined its own *Miss Stardust,* though hardly," he added snottily, "by that title. We will consent to allow her to represent the remainder of this galaxy. She, plus the four contestants from your own system, will make five. Fairness beyond this you cannot expect to receive."

"Four . . . in our system?" Sampson asks.

"There is no movable life on the four outermost planets of your system."

Now I am no devotee of Astronomy.

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Harry, but, even for me, this is a hell of a way to get the word about life on other worlds. From the lips of an abusive cabbage. Lips? What lips?

Well, to make a grotesque story short, we accept the conditions. We pick up his under-the-deck deal. If the talking Hoover can make piers collapse and skies liquify, who are we to argue with him? We say, "You win," and everything is cracky bad.

After that the vacuum cleaner from another world exits. Exeunt all on his heels, to view him passing through the hall ceiling, head first. We discover later, from a gibbering roof janitor, that cabbage head gazookahs himself up through the skylight and floats up to his interstellar crockery, which is hovering fifty feet over the building. Said saucer then whips into the blue yonder and is gone. As is the composure of one formerly sane janitor.

The judges and I have a session. A couple of them get brave and cry fraud. I tell them off. I inform them that they are not pinned to the floor by blue light and I am. They reflect on this.

The upshot is we have cards painted for the contestants we expect. I do the painting, not wishing to let some hand-painter blab about the new cards he did. I consult Sampson for the information. There should be a card for *Miss Mercury*, he says, one for *Miss Venus*, two others for *Miss Mars* and *Miss Jupiter*. Of course, he says, they doubtless have different names for their planets. Notwithstanding, blusters Mayor Grassblood, if they are taking part in an Earth contest, they'll take our names for them or leave them. I remind him of cabbage head making the rain, collapsing the pier and playing elevator with himself through the floors. Grassblood pauses a moment to reflect on that.

We deduce a slight problem on the title card for the last contestant. We cannot call her *Miss Stardust* because, by the standards of the contest, she ain't yet. But the vacuum cleaner says she is *their Miss Stardust*. So what to do? We settle for an unsatisfactory *Miss Outer Space*.

"The monster will not take a shine to that," forbodes Mendelheimer.

We hush him up. We retire to the elevator, punchy but unbowed, wondering what the day will bring.

It brings headaches.

WE DECIDE to spread none of this about since we're not sure. I don't mean we're not sure the vacuum cleaner doesn't mean business, we're not sure we should let cat from bag, lest the walls of the auditorium get kicked down by the eager.

But, as per usual, some creep on the inside gives out with a strictly-between-you-and-me, and before you can say Coma Berenices the place is crawling with rumor. Add the eye witness of one hysterical frump who sights the crockery take off over the auditorium, and you have the seeds, the ripe beginning, and the rotten harvest.

I am stopped. Is it true about the saucer, they ask, about the literate head of cabbage? Ha ha, I say, that's a good one.

Reaching the stage forty minutes and many ha ha's later, I find out how good a one it really is.

The contestants have shown with their delegate, coach and chaperone, cabbage head. All the babes who are stacked in Earthly manner are gaping like kids at a sideshow. They stand around in their Gloober suits with their eyes popping out.

This the delegate does not like. Because, when I extend my hand with a Kingfish smile, the big yellow eye flashes over me like the headlight on a locomotive. I see there is nothing to shake anyway, swallow a *faux pas* lump, and pretend not to notice.

"Well, you made it," I chirp.

"Did you doubt it?" says he in a surly gasp which has all the amiability of a Bendix washer conversing.

"No! No!" I say, jollity flecking off my ashen jowls. "Not at all. We've been

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waiting for you."

He ignores that. He gives the people on stage the single eye. He hisses.

"My wards are losing patience with your goggling Earthians. I demand you have the contest started immediately and see to it that this offensive staring ceases."

I nod, I smile, I make the rounds dispersing, my stomach doing pushups. That completed, I return to the vacuum cleaner. He says something which makes my heart bounce like a handball.

"If," he says, "I note the slightest prejudice toward my wards, the remotest suggestion of alien regard—there will be severe repercussions."

And so drags on stage the contest née Miss Stardust.

Ever have a dream where everything goes wrong? Where no matter what you try, it backfires? Where you're the eternal blunderer? That's what I feel like in that contest. The thing is a shambles.

There is a long rumble of curiosity when, after a few Earth babes have minced on and off stage, we hold up the card that reads *Miss Mercury*. Then a few hoots and catcalls. These suddenly ending when the kid herself makes her entrance.

Now if a technicolor rock comes bobbing out on a stage, Harry, what would you do? The same as the audience did, I speck. Eyeballs protrude, faces blank, jaws gape; in a thousand brains comes the sole query:

Wot in 'ell is this?

Then some visiting fireman gives out with a guffaw and that starts it off. They all decide this is a wonderful gag. I glance a queasy shot over my trembling shoulder and see murder in that yellow eye. My Adam's apple does a swan dive into my lungs, and I turn back.

Applause now. Great little gag that, ha ha. Bring on some more. Some more comes.

Miss Venus.

A hothouse plant with eyes. It slips across the stage on its bottom fronds. The eyes, three, look around the audience. They look ever so slightly disgusted.

ANOTHER roar from the audience, this one a little forced. Like the roar of a man who, by gosh, is going to have a good time even if his hair *is* starting to stand on end. This gag is almost *too* good. A guy could swear that green plant was walking around by itself, the wires are so well concealed.

I smell a breath over my shoulder. Rather foul.

"This reception is highly unsatisfactory," bubbles cabbage head. "You will alleviate the situation or there will be increasing trouble for you."

I look at him. I think of flying saucers and ray guns and California going up in toto.

That in mind, I bounce out on stage as Miss Venus exits. I raise the mike from the floor. I raise my palsied arms.

"May I have your attention," my voice booms through the place. Only electrically.

Brief pause in pandemonium.

"Listen, people," I say, "I know this is hard to swallow but those two contestants you just saw are really from Mercury and . . ."

I am laughed to scorn. I am inundated by Bronx cheers. A cushion flies in the air. Mocking airplanes fashioned from programs fill the auditorium sky. Confetti drizzles from the balconies.

"Wait a minute!" I shout. "You attention please."

More noise. I wait for the subsiding. I see flash bulb lightning everywhere. Story and pix will be in the newspapers post-haste. For the first time, unworked-for publicity gives me a pain. Let's face it, I'm scared, Harry. When heroes were made, I was sleeping one off in the next room.

"Let's be fair to these contestants," I say, my voice a lustrous croak, "Let's show them some real Earthlike sportsmanship."

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I then let loose a flimsy wave of hand, sheathe the mike in the floor, beckon to the m.c. to take over, and traipse off stage. Right into the vacuum cleaner. I raise a shaky smile to the edifice of his dubious good nature. He glares at me.

"*Miss Mercury* is grossly offended," he tells me. "She states that if she is not chosen winner of the contest, there will be severe retaliation by her elders."

"*What!*"

I recoil against the curtain.

"Now wait a second," I gasp. "Have a heart. We can't rig the contest just because . . ."

I'm talking to deaf ears. To no ears, to be correct.

"You created your own problem," he says, "when you named your contest as you did."

"Buddy, *I* didn't name it!"

"Beside the actual point," he says, and wheels off. I turn back to the stage with haunted blinkers. Just in time to get a fast load of *Miss Mars* making her debut on old Earth.

More like an hors d'ouevre than a female. The trunk and head are two Spanish olives, and the legs and arms are toothpicks stuck in them. I hang onto the curtain ropes with a sorry groan. The audience isn't catcalling so much now. It is sinking in. Even though it's a hard thing to admit and still claim sanity. You see a couple of olives stroll on stage, preceded by an ambulating tropical plant and a rainbow rock that crawls and first you laugh it off, then the creeps get to you.

The creeps are getting to them.

Miss Jupiter doesn't help any when she slides across stage in a transparent globe. She looks like a dirty iceberg. No face, arms, legs—no nothing. I hear someone in the audience gag. Someone says ugh. All we need now, I am thinking, is . . .

"*Miss Mars* has informed me," the vacuum cleaner say, "that unless she wins first prize, her injured emotions will result in venomous impulses toward revenge against this planet."

"Now, *wait* a minute, buddy," I implore.

"FINISH the contest quickly," he says. "My wards are becoming violently ill at the sight of Earth people en masse."

"What do you mean, ill?"

"They find your appearance surpassingly repugnant," he says.

"Now, *look*," I say.

He is gone.

I watch him roll off. They find *us* repugnant. If I were not ready to cry I would laugh. But I am ready to cry.

Highlight of the show, *Miss Stardust*, their own *Miss Stardust*, comes out of the wings.

I can't say she walked. She didn't roll. It wasn't a crawl. You might say she slobbered her way across the stage.

She was an orange jellyfish with a skirt and eyes. She was some jello quivering from the bowl in search of whipped cream. I better shut up, I'm making myself sick.

No, I keep telling myself, *she* wouldn't do that. She couldn't possibly think that . . .

"Our *Miss Stardust* has informed me . . ." starts the delegate.

That's all, brother.

"Oh she has!" I yell. "What's the matter with Venus and Jupiter, are they sick?"

"They also demand first prize," says the vacuum cleaner with the head like a cabbage.

I melt, I drip into the floorboards and disappear between the cracks. In wishful imagination anyway. I really just stand there, my mouth offering a large home for needy flies.

"How can they *all* win?" I ask in a gurgling mutter.

"Beside the actual point," *he* says and *I* think in unison.

Briefly, my dander goes up again.

"I think you came here just to start trouble," I tell him.

His eye is on me like an exterminator's lining sights on a particularly odious specimen.

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"We do not like you Earthmen," he says. "My wards and I find you both obnoxious to the mind and unwholesome to the eye. My wards and I will be glad when they have all won first prize and can leave your loathsome presence."

I stare at his receding dustbag back. I ponder slipping out the back way and hopping a raft for South America. In the pit the band is playing *I'm In Love With The Man In The Moon,* the only interplanetary song they know. The judges are stumbling off stage for a break, looking for a good ten fingers of anything potent. They had become judges in the hope of rousing senile corpuscles by viewing luscious femalia. Instead . . . this.

I shepherd them all into a dressing room the size of an occupied closet. They all stand there with untended sweat drops dripping from their portly faces. They direct smitten eyes in my direction.

"We have a first-class hellish problem," I tell them. I enlarge.

"But . . . *that's impossible!*" cries Local Dignitary Number Two, unable to smite his noble brow because the room is two small.

"I've told him that," I say, "He's not buying."

GLOOBER of etcetera and etcetera sinks down into a chair which just manages to support ample him.

"I'm sick," he announces.

Grassblood pounds his well-pounded palm.

"This is un-American!" he says and purses lips.

"And I have a niece who wanted to win the contest," says Mendelheimer sadly.

"What!" cries Local Dig 2. "Fraud! Calumny!"

"Awright awready—*stow it!*" That is an angry me, fed up to here.

I ease immediate tension. I tell Mendelheimer that even if his niece, *Miss Ailamentary Canal,* is impartially judged best-looking head, she can't win now because we are hung up. One of the outer spacers *has* to get the prize.

"Or . . . *what?*" asks Gloober of.

"Or else we get pulverized," I say.

"You think they can really do this thing?" asks Mendelheimer.

"Buddy, after what I've seen that character do, I'll take his word on the rest."

"But which contestant should we give it to?" Sampson poses the big question.

Local Dig 2 throws up his hands in municipal despair.

"We are trapped!" he cries.

I think so too.

Well, we have to adjourn, because the contest must go on. I advise them to stall as long as possible, measure everything twice, ogle slow. They file back to their stand with the gaiety of nobles climbing into tumbrils. They sit there, and I know they are worried when *Miss Brooklyn* writhes by and they don't bat an eyelash. When such a stack passing before the eye causes no reaction, you are either powerful worried or you are dead.

Again I attempt to reason with cabbage head.

"Look," I say, "you're intelligent. Isn't it obvious that we can't give *one* prize to *five* contestants?"

Earthian math is lost on him.

"This contest must end soon," is all he tells me, "This superficial chatter is merely irritating us further. There is obviously no competition between my lovely wards and those hideous creatures parading out there. No judge, be he of Earth or Heaven, could possibly award a prize to such manifest hideousness."

Glimmers. A germ.

"*Hideous?*" I say, "You think they're hideous?"

"You are *all* hideous."

I turn away. Suddenly I have it. My brain is clicking at last. I rush to a phone and make my bid to save pore Earth.

Then I ease on stage and slide in beside Sampson. There, while eying

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morsels of perfect 36-22-36, I slip him the word from the corner of my mouth.

He breaks into the smile reserved for cash buyers of this year's Cadillac. Then he leans over and whispers the news to Gall Stone's civic pride. The mayor passes it on to Mendelheimer's shell-like ears, Mendelheimer to Gloober, and Gloober to Loc Dig 2.

Now they are all grinning and looking with revitalized leers at passing pulchritude, and I am feeling like a very clever publicity man.

This is probably the longest beauty contest known to man. It has to be. My plan needs time, and we have to buy it expensive. We have the contestants coming on frontways, sideways and backwards. Singly, in pairs, in groups, and in a long zoftic line. They do everything but walk on their hands. The babes start jawing about it. Even the audience gets a gutfull of willowy shapes. And when glassy-eyed males get tired of looking at babes, man, you've overdone it.

But by then it is all right, because my plan is ready to go.

I go to the mike.

LADIES and gentlemen," I say. "Before we announce our winner, I want to add another surprise award to our list of prizes. We had formerly announced the loving cup, the car, the Hollywood contract, the years' free servicing and chassis work at Max Factor's, and other smaller items. Now we have another prize."

I pause for my coup.

"A month's vacation in the Mediterranean with none other than . . ."

I wave my arm toward the wings.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I ham it, *"Mister Universe!"*

The big blond giant comes padding out in his tights, and fed-up housewives do nip-ups in their seats.

While the cheers and groans ring out over my weary but joyous head, I gaze off stage.

As I figure, the broads from space are crowding around their delegate. I nod to the m.c. and amble off the boards, my mind cool with victory.

So we're hideous, are we? Well, that's too bad. If they want the first prize, they have to take that vacation too. A month in the Mediterranean with *Mister Manifest Hideousness.* Take it or leave it.

Cabbage head spies me now, and whizzes across the floor. I gulp as he approaches, the feeling of victory sort of dying. That eye looks *mad.*

"You attempt trickery!" he accuses me.

"Trickery?" I make with the bland face.

"You intend to carry this ruse out?" he asks.

"Mister," I say, "This is *our* contest. We'll give you first prize, but we have the right to say what the prize will be."

"Beside the actual point," he says.

"What?" I feel something giving.

"How *dare* you proclaim that creature *Mister Universe!"* he gargles, "Are you not aware that the *Universe* contains more galaxies than there are stars in your *own* galaxy?"

"Huh?"

"This calls for drastic action. I must call immediately on the alliance of galaxies. There will be a contest held in this building to decide who is really entitled to the name *Mister Universe.* Let me see, there are approximately seven million, five hundred and ninety-five thousand base representatives which, divided into their integral parts, makes . . ."

Harry, what do you say? Can you use a weak assistant to help you push beans? Harry, I'll work for nothing. Please! Joe.

Coming Soon: WHITE SPOT, a Brilliant Novelet by Murray Leinster

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Illustration by PAUL ORBAN

The BOX

By ARTHUR PORGES

Problem: How can you break the unbreakable?

SELDOM has an object no bigger than a pound cake and far less complicated-looking had the eyes of so many eminent scientists fastened upon it with greedy concentration. Most of them knew something of the box's history, but Dr. Soulie, Director of the Research Foundation, summarized it once more.

"This metal—ah—object, which arrived by parcel post from Arizona today," he said proudly, "is almost certainly the first non-terrestrial artifact ever discovered. As you've heard, it was found among the deepest fragments of Meteor Crater, and to this organization has been assigned the delicate and intriguing task of opening it. Quite an honor, our selection, believe me, gentlemen."

"Is there anything in it?" At least four of the guest scientists asked that question.

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"That's exactly what we're going to find out," Dr. Soulie said, smiling with urbane confidence. "Right here in laboratory Six-A."

"Does it rattle?" Grace, the metallurgist, demanded.

"No, although I haven't dared to handle it roughly. There may be documents wedged inside, however. But we must open it with a minimum of damage. And you will note there's not a single joint. Just a metal—ah—parallelopiped."

"Then how do you know it's even hollow?" somebody queried. There were several snickers, mostly from non-Foundation experts.

"We don't," Soulie retorted with some asperity. "But it's comparatively light, and since the alloy was too dense for X-rays, according to the Arizona people, we may logically infer hollowness."

He paused challengingly, but there were no audible dissents. For one thing, the reasoning was valid; and for another he was, after all, the Director, and had many juicy grants at his disposal. In fact, this last reason was more than enough.

"Then I gather," Grace drawled, "that the alloy is a new one, unknown on Earth."

"So we're told. However, it seems they didn't do much in Arizona. The box obviously has not been tampered with—it's unmarked. I can hardly comprehend their passing it on to us without even trying. It seems against human nature. But in view of our equipment and staff, maybe they acted with unusual intelligence for that bunch. A bungling operator could ruin the box without being of much help to science." He looked about with a self-satisfied air. "And now, gentlemen, let's discuss possible methods. Here, pass it around."

THE box vanished in a flurry of eager hands. It went from one person to another with a speed determined chiefly by a struggle just short of blows between present holder and applicant. Finally, however, all had examined it at least briefly.

"Why not drill a hole first, and see if it is hollow?" The suggestion came from Professor Ajole, distinguished guest physicist.

There was a murmur of approval. The Director turned to an overalled little man standing meekly to one side. He had the face of an elderly and worried horse.

"Lece," the Director snapped, "get us a hand-drill from the tool room. Diamond point, the smallest size." The little man nodded, and slipped out. "Naturally, an experiment is superior to inference. Still, if it's solid, I'll be much surprised. Anyhow, we'll soon know."

"I was just thinking of Pandora," a young biologist said to no one in particular. "Is it a good idea to poke holes so blindly in this—this extra-terrestrial puzzle-box. Always easier to open a thing than close it again."

"Would you like us to clap it in a museum and forget the whole affair?" Grace reproved him. "How could anything buried millions of years hurt anybody?"

"I was only asking," the biologist said sweetly. "But speaking professionally, I assure you that microbes, for example, can live through a lot. Even mice are rather hardy. I just read about some who made a nest in a television set. That's being very viable, indeed."

Grace held his nose, and then the group closed in on Lece, returning with the drill. But Soulie waved them all aside. To him the honor, his gesture plainly indicated. A former research man, he meant to show them he could still use his hands.

He set the diamond point squarely on one corner of the bluish plane surface and, exerting only the slightest pressure, twirled the crank. Amost instantly he raised the tool, peering at the attack point. He frowned.

"Hm. Nothing yet."

Once again he placed the needle-pointed gem and, increasing the thrust,

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renewed his efforts. The bit skidded from the slick, hard metal, and he swore luridly. Grace grunted in surprised appreciation, receiving a glare.

Soulie re-spotted the drill point, and this time threw his weight against the palm rest. Jaw set, he turned the crank vigorously. After several seconds, he lifted the tool, taking another look.

"Well, I'll be damned! Not a scratch. This box isn't so fragile, after all. Hah! That Arizona bunch! So much the better. We'll show 'em up. Lece, get us an electric drill with a boron carbide point. Make it snappy."

The attendant shuffled out. Soulie beamed at the audience, garnering a few sycophantic leers. "Just as well it's tough. Less chance of knocking the thing to bits."

"Maybe getting it open will be the real problem," the biologist said.

"Oh, we'll do the job, all right." Grace replied. There're chisels, torches, and if all else fails, just mark it 'Do Not Open Till Christmas,' and leave it with my nine-year-old nephew! Ah, here's Lece."

Grimly Soulie plugged in the power drill, a heavy-duty model. Setting its point against the stubborn alloy, he pressed the switch. A puzzled expression crossed his plump face. Gradually he bore down on the tool. Then, with a wondering exclamation, he shut off the drill, handing it back, still attached, to Lece, who accepted the burden wordlessly and began to reel in the cord.

"No dice, even with a power drill," Soulie said, eying Grace. "You're the metallurgist around here—what now?"

"Try a hydrogen torch, that new atomic model."

Soulie turned to Lece, who was already going out. "Get the portable one," he ordered.

"Don't bring the one that's not portable," somebody advised gravely. "It can't be carried!"

Soulie reddened. "And they say scientists are too serious," he protested ironically, trying in vain to identify the voice. If it was a staff member, God help him!

WHEN Lece wheeled in the torch, the Director motioned to Grace. "Your baby. Frank. I've never used one."

The metallurgist rose lazily and made a few deft adjustments. There was a spark, a stuttering pop, and an orange knitting needle of almost pure heat energy jetted from a compound nozzle. Lip between his teeth, Grace brought the potent flame close to the box, and with delicate precision, flicked it across one corner. A quick glance, a snort, and he tried again, somewhat more slowly. Finally, scowling, he let the hissing incandescence play squarely on the metal.

Ten seconds passed; then a whole minute. Wondering sounds came from the grouped experts. Grace reached for the cut-off, and the flame vanished. The metallurgist looked straight at Soulie, then shook his head twice. A moment later Lece was muscling the torch out of the laboratory.

Soulie dabbed cautiously with a pencil, then with a moistened finger. "Not even hot!" he marveled. "Seems to swallow heat. Some alloy!"

There was silence for half a minute, then the biologist said in a diffident voice, "Why not try a hammer and cold chisel? I'm no physicist, but maybe a large shearing force—"

"We don't want to batter hell out of the thing," the Director objected.

But Grace cut in quickly. "He won't. Let OConnor try his chisel." He grinned. "This I want to see."

"Lece—" Soulie began, and stopped.

"He's gone," Grace said. As soon as he heard the tool name, he was on the way like a scalded cat. "Who trained that character for you—Clyde Beatty?"

"Lece is a competent janitor," the Director said coldly. "Not bright, but willing and trustworthy. Rather slow but—" He broke off as the subject of his restrained eulogy returned.

Soulie watched tight-lipped as O'Connor, with suddenly reluctant fingers

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took the hammer and chisel. "Go easy," Soulie urged the biologist. "If we smash the thing to bits through carelessness, the Arizona gang will tell the whole world about it."

"Fat chance," Grace said. "It's going to take my testing lab for this job. You can't expect a boy to do a man's work."

"I'll just touch it first," O'Connor reassured the Director. He held the chisel against one edge of the box, and tapped it with the plastic-faced mallet. No result. He tried again, a little harder.

"Give the damned thing a real clout!" somebody growled, and before Soulie could protest, the biologist swung with a full-arm stroke.

Splat! Mallet struck chisel a mighty, jarring blow. The tool's edge glanced from the impervious metal, gouging a huge flake from the composition top of the table. There was a howl of anguish.

"Hey, I just got those benches! You damned butcher!"

O'Connor swore in disgust, slamming the tools down. Unobtrusively Lece reached for them.

"Now what?" Soulie demanded.

"You might jump on it," Grace jibed. The Director ignored him. "No, seriously, here's my idea. Let's put a tungstel cutter on the big press. Then we'll just slice or crush one side of the box right off. These piddling little hand tools are no use. My press is the baby for this job."

"Is it?" an anonymous skeptic chirped.

Grace whirled. "The big press goes up to five million pounds," he said belligerently. "You put that force on a tungstel blade and it'll slice through anything."

"An excellent idea," Soulie agreed suavely. "Shall we adjourn to the testing lab? Lece, you bring the box." They filed out.

In the spacious laboratory where concrete blocks were crumbled like sugar cubes, iron bars twisted like licorice sticks, and water pressed into weird, hot solids, Grace was king. He selected a new blade of tungstel, the latest alloy, locked it in place on the upper surface of the giant press, and beckoned to Lece, who advanced with the box.

Grace clamped the artifact firmly in position and, manipulating the controls as skilfully as any organist, started the shearing blade on its irresistible downward glide. The pumping motors purred, forcing oil into the cylinder.

THERE was the faintest of clicks as metal kissed metal. Then, with the utmost nicety, Grace moved a lever. Twenty unblinking eyes shifted to a pressure dial as its needle flickered.

Fifty pounds; one hundred; three hundred; a thousand—one ton. Somebody sucked air between his teeth. At a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, the press creaked a little, as if settling down to its task, but the box remained mute and inviolate. One million pounds, and the operator, as if struck by a sudden thought, moved to the remote control position back of ferro-concrete. The others followed in haste.

Slowly the pointer shifted. The motors were laboring now. Three million, five hundred thousand pounds; four million. At the maximum of five million pounds, a red light flashed, and the dial again read zero as the automatic cut-off took over, saving the shear-pin.

Nobody spoke. They merely looked at each other.

Finally Grace said, almost plaintively, "It can't be true. There ain't no such metal!"

Somebody cleared his throat with nervous timidity.

"Dr. Soulie, sir—"

The big man turned. "Well, Lece," he demanded impatiently.

"I think I could open that there box, sir."

Ten pairs of lungs exhaled as many explosive breaths.

"You could open the—" Soulie glared at him. "Lece, have you been drinking?"

The little man shrunk into his ill-fit-

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ting overalls. "Drinking, sir? No, sir. Why, I never touch—"

"Lece," the Director boomed, "you've seen what we've tried on this—this infernal Martian cashbox. Are you suggesting seriously that you . . . Bah!"

"But I could open it—get it opened, I mean," Lece repeated stubbornly, his faded brown eyes liquid with emotion. "That's what you want, and I can help. I always try to help." It was a long speech for him.

"By God!" Grace cried, oddly touched. "Give the guy a chance."

Soulie looked at him. "Turn this priceless box over to an ignorant layman—a janitor?"

"You just told us how trustworthy he is," O'Connor broke in, grinning. "He won't steal it."

"I know very well he won't steal it," the Director began indignantly. "But—"

"Do you think," Grace asked, solemn-faced, "he might break it—by accident, sort of carelessly? Drop it on a tile floor maybe?"

Soulie flushed. "For two cents," he growled, "I'd let him show up this bunch of incompetents." He thrust his chin toward the staff members. "My technicians!" Then turning back to Lece. "How would *you* open it, may I ask?"

The little man shuffled his feet. They were clad in high army brogans, big enough for an adult moa. "I don't wanna say, sir. But today's Monday. If you lemme have it till Wednesday, I'm pretty sure I'll open it. But I can't promise to make it neat; it'll be all in pieces. I expect."

"This box—*this* box in pieces?"

"Yessir."

"Let's be fair," O'Connor suggested, with quick Irish fancy. "If Lece breaks this box into bitsy pieces, he ought to get a raise. And if he fails—"

"He ought to be fired," Grace snapped.

"No," the biologist protested. "He's only trying to help his boss. That'd be pretty small stuff."

"You're all crazy," Soulie declared, shaking his head. "But this box has me baffled. Here." He held it out to Lece. "I can be just as wacky as the next one. It's all yours until Wednesday noon." He was aware, instinctively, that at this moment he was higher in the esteem of his staff than ever before. It felt good.

"Make it one o'clock, please, sir," the janitor pled. "They might be late."

"*Who* might be late?" the Director queried sharply, but Lece remained dumbly recalcitrant. "All right. One o'clock. Now get out of here before sanity raises its little pointed head." Flushed with pleasure, Lece trotted away. "When he gets an idea," Soulie muttered, "you might as well argue with a lemming on its way to the ocean."

"Beats anything, such molecular structure," Professor Ajole said in pontific tones. "I must mention it in my book."

"What book?" Evidently one benighted person in the group had not yet heard about Ajole's life-work-in-progress, a mammoth tome on elasticity.

"He's writing a sequel to a great juvenile classic," O'Connor dead-panned. "'*Elsie Dinsmore Meets* the *Marquis de Sade*, or *Les One Hundred and Twenty Journees de—*'"

"Who else wants a drink besides me?" the director interrupted tactfully. It was unanimous, and they streamed out. . . .

WEDNESDAY, at twelve forty-eight, staff and guest scientists were gathered in the lab again. Promptly at one o'clock Lece appeared. His horse face was as melancholy as ever, and he breathed heavily.

"Curse it!" O'connor groaned. "He's muffed the job. I was hoping—"

Silently the janitor opened the cheap canvas handbag he was carrying and, wooden-faced, shook out on the table a mass of metal scraps, none, larger than a playing card, and many scarred, dented, and twisted. There was no doubt whatever that these bluish shards derived from the strange box.

(Turn to Page 108)

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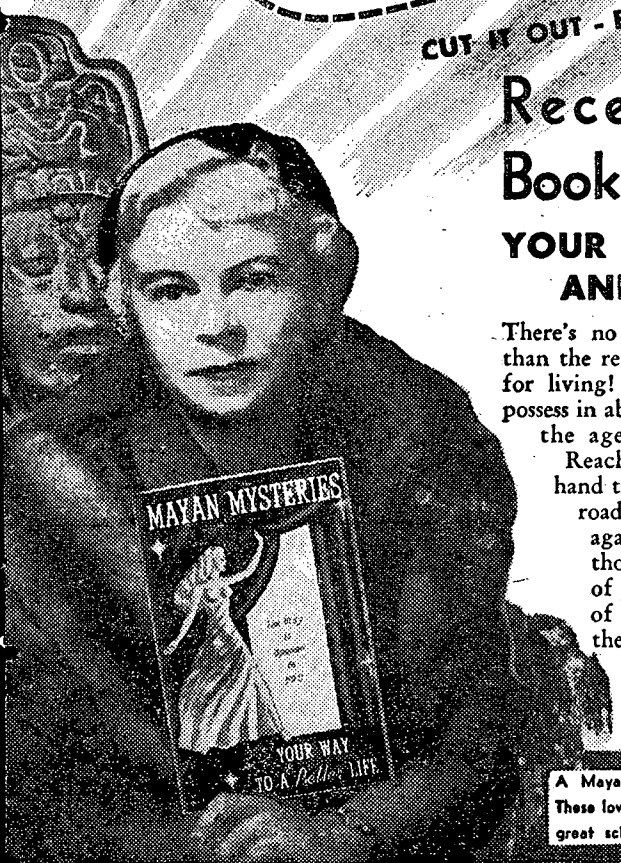

A Mayan Astronomical Observatory many centuries old. These lovely ruins still stand at Chichen Itza, beckoning some great scientist to discover even greater ways to wisdom.

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"Will I really get a raise, sir?" he asked Soulie in anxious tones.

There was a babble of questions, but the Director waved the others to silence.

"Lece—" he began, and lost his voice. Then, trying again, "Lece, this is incredible! How did you do it? What was inside, and where is it? Speak up, man!"

"Nothing inside, sir, I'm sorry to say. The box was empty." The scientists exchanged disappointed glances. Grace was examining the battered fragments, shaking his head in wonder.

"Lece," he said, "come clean before I die of curiosity. What did you use on the box to—to do this?" He pointed to the heaped fragments.

"Well, sir," the little man replied proudly, "I know a sure way to break anything open or apart." He looked at Soulie. "I just mailed it to myself by parcel post on Monday, and it arrived today, all in pieces, just like everything does. But," he added mournfully, "th box was empty."

The Director gaped at him. "Damn i Lece, don't try to be funny!"

"But, sir, that's all I did." He sound ed grieved at the Director's attitud "See, here's the wrapping." He fishe out a double handful of pasteboard con fetti. "They delivered the whole bus ness in a paper sack. It hadn't bee properly wrapped, the postman told me Said I could file a claim, though. I trie that once in Nineteen-nineteen. I sti get mail about it, but no money."

"He's crazy!" Grace exclaimed. "Th Director told us that box arrived her to begin with by parcel from Arizona And there wasn't a mark on it."

"I know," Lece said. "I opened th original package." Then with the pris tine simplicity of a great artist, "Yo see, sir, the Arizona people didn't labe it 'Fragile.' "

THE THOUGHT TRANSLATOR

(Concluded from Page 67)

you—having an Aristotelian mind—the squares, of course, mean 1 (true) and the circles 2 (false). But do not forget, the contra-Aristotelion mind will interpret them in exactly the opposite way. Do not forget this, and look into your mirror with that knowledge in mind. You will then see that your mirror has turned your conjunction into a disjunction for the other mind, and your disjunction appears as his conjunction.

Do not try the same experiment with your value-sequences written vertically, as they are placed in our tables. It does not work that way—at least not in this simple manner. You want to know why? Well, the trouble is, you are only *looking at* your mirror. But when Alice met Tweedledum and Tweedledee she had *stepped through* the looking glass, and you have no idea how much of a difference that made!

WORKIN' OF THE GREEN

'Tis a proud day for the Irish, and for the rest of specie Homo Sapiens too. Without fuss or fanfare, a team of University of California scientists have discovered the *complete* process of photosythesis—that process by which the green plant creates food out of the energy found in sunlight, air, water and chemicals.

Reporting to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Doctor Daniel I. Arnon revealed that when the little green particles, called chloroplasts, were made to function outside the living plant, the way was open for mankind's imitation of nature.

Doctor Arnon foresees synthetic food production by this process. So toss out those hydroponic tanks, and get ready for the workin' of the green!

—Herbert D. Kastle

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THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 8)

also the mind itself. In fact, total negation is the logical definition of death." Replace the spiritual term "death" by a physical term, and you get something approaching your idea of "anti-matter." And the latter is somehow related to the "nothingness" of space. The concept of the seetee mind points indeed to an deeper underlying reality which is mutually exclusive with our concept of physical reality.

Mr. Stott, you could have quoted Dirac's theory of the positron to support your idea. What I mean is this: the number of energy states of an electron is of infinite order. If we plot them on a chart the sequence of energy states extends from zero upward. But the sequence also runs downward indicating an equal number of "minus" energy states below the zero mark. Any negatively charged electron can either occupy a state of "minus" energy (not to be confused with negative charge) or of "plus" energy. Now electrons display the tendency to drop into states of lower energy. Consequently there is a general trend to energy levels below the zero mark. This trend however is modified by the "exclusion principle" (Pauli) which does not permit more than one electron to occupy a given state of energy. Now all states of "minus" energy *are* occupied. But plenty of electrons are left. They occupy—because they can't help it—the "plus" energy states. This helpless crowd makes up our "real" universe! The others have withdrawn from our world. They have disappeared in the vacuum of empty space. However, according to Dirac, they are not completely unobservable.

A gamma ray, for instance, may jolt one of these "minus" energy electrons out of its non-real state. If that happens a "hole" is left in the vacuum, and this "hole"—according to Dirac—appears to us as a particle having the same mass as an electron but positively charged. In other words: a positron.

It seems to be obvious that minus-energy particles (qua particles) and plus-energy particles are mutually exclusive Forms of Reality. From our viewpoint our world is "real" and the minus-energy world is no-thing, empty space, just Nothingness. But it might be equally valid that from Beyond, that is from the viewpoint of "minus" energy *our* world is mere voidness and Nothingness. *A Mind residing in this world of "minus" energy would be non-existent to us. But his thoughts would make sense and have meaning.*

Now meaning is not material—and in this sense it is unaffected by the interchange relation of material realities. This poses the fascinating problem: can we communicate with a mind which relatively to us is non-existent? Religion has always answered this question in the affirmative. Bernadette insisted at Lourdes that the Holy Virgin had spoken

[Turn page]

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to her. St. Joan also believed that the Saints had addressed themselves to her. Speaking in terms of physical science and our empirical "reality" neither God nor the Saints do exist.

But does that end the question? I think not. And I intended my concept of a seetee mind to be a first step in the direction of answer to the problem: are Revelation, Clairvoyance, Precognition, Second Sight, etc., rational terms that designate genuine phenomena. Obviously nobody noticed my intention.

That should hold the critics until next time, Doctor. But Stott, Olcott and company doubtless won't let it rest there, so get your typewriter ready for the next blast. But now let's turn to the . . .

SAUCER SPOTTERS
by Frank James Newsham, Jr.

Dear Editor: I never used to think of reading s-f mags, much less of writing to them, because of some stinkers I got ahold of a few years ago when I first started reading s-f.

The other day, however, one of my friends who is also a member of my club THE SAUCER SPOTTERS OF AMERICA (so called because all of its members have seen a flying saucer at one time or another) convinced me that your mags are worth reading. Well, I sat down in my living room with a stack of your mags at my elbow, and d'ya know what? They're good! Yes, I really liked them. There were both new and back issues and looking them over I think that SS is the best mag of its kind in existence today. The stories in the fall ish were all good, though I did like *Simple Psiman* best.

Looking through your letter column, TEV, I can't help feeling that Carol McKinney and some others are nice friendly people who like a friendly argument once in a while, but some others like this DEEK character are rather obnoxious.

Well anyway so long for now and you'll be hearing from me later as I intend to become a full time fan.—*2022A South 11th Street, St. Louis 4, Mo.*

How about those saucers, though? They're in the newspapers again, and I should think that your club would be booming. When you're not looking for saucers, you might keep an eye out for the . . .

BEM WHO CRIES FORMIC TEARS
by Joel Covey

Dear Editor: You have broken two of my little hearts and made me cry tears of formic acid. Now you are saying "what did I do?" You didn't print my letter, that's what; and moreover you didn't print my name at the end of the Ether Vibrates, that's what. Omit one "that's what," take your choice. I got an extra one in there someplace. You softened the blow by having *The Snows of Ganymede*, a very good novel. I would welcome correspondence from anybody who wants to write to a two-headed bem who crys tears of formic acid.—*6 Rugg Street, St. Albans, Vermont.*

The rest of your letter was eaten away by the acid tears, so we can't print it all. But here's a letter from a man who writes about . . .

ANDERSON AND HEINLEIN
by Des Emery

Dear Editor: I think you've really been staying on the ball with stories of late. Right now I'm most concerned with the Winter SS. Only fault that I can see is that you didn't couple Poul with Virgil. But since Virgil's illos were in his usual superb style, I didn't mind too much. Nearly dropped the mag though, when I saw that his *weren't* the illos for the lead story.

And that brings up Poul's Future History. You asked for comments, so here you are.

Of course, it's impossible to think a bit on his history without thinking of Heinlein's. But to me, the greatest difference lies not in the actual chronological scales but in the different feelings evoked by each.

This is not to compare the writing abilities of Anderson and Heinlein—on that I'd rather not make a choice—but in assessing the mood qualities of each author, I find that Heinlein's works leave me half-content and half-wistful. The story's over, complete and entire, yet I always wish it would go on. I feel that wonderful inner warmth of pride that I'm a part of this race of Man, with destiny in Space.

But Anderson leaves me with a thrill and a chill and a wish that I could personally live through his stories. With him, I participate rather than act the role of a spectator. His stories deposit a sense of completion, and almost of satiation in me.

As for the rest of SS, which, by the way, is one of the best issues I've read for some time, I'd like to have seen *More Stately Mansions* written out to a longer story. It has enough implied material for a fairly long novel. *Only With Thine Eyes* was the best short story. But when are you going to get another Kuttner?—*93 Hemlock Street, St. Thomas, Ont., Canada.*

Kuttner visited us just before Christmas, and we have hopes . . . We've got another story by Robert F. Young coming up, and it's just as good as *Mansions*. It's called *An Apple for the Teacher.*

NO MORE LETTERS
by Joe Gibson

Dear Editor: Shades of the dead, prehis-

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toric past. Didjaknow the slump in s-f has got some o' these youngfans thinking they've been persecuted? Here they've been thinking they had earned public acceptance by now, and s-f had come of age, and everyone was so damned intelligent he had to strain hisself to say something nonsensical. Now it's gone, dead, past. Even Bob Tucker is reviving LeZ, I hear; but you wouldn't know about that, you youngfan, would you? Fandom is now a poor li'l persecuted bunch, lone mental giants in this primitive culture, and now they'll be wondering when the world is gonna come of age. And y'know sumpin? These poor youngfans will think *it's never happened before!* Tsk.

Oh, they may have read Moskowitz' *Immortal Storm.* But while we're scraping up relics around here, how'd you like to have me blasting SS covers again? Man, dig the blaze on this Winter SS cover. Got ol' N-2 really fired up out there in space where there's no oxygen, haven't you? So give Valigursky a knock in the head. Who the blazes does he think he's working for, *Hollywood?* Or TV, maybe? Give that man a Space Cadet badge! (Knocking heads is usually somewhat confusing around here.)

However, I've decided not to write you bums any more letters. Not when you'll print stuff like Dick Stott's remarks. Anybody who starts asking where I'm from is getting just a little too nosey.—*24 Kensington Ave., Jersey City 4, N. J.*

Valigursky knew what he was doing—it wasn't a fire that needed oxygen. Read the story, but only after you're off Xeno for three days. And while you're reading things, how about the latest letter from our Ohio correspondent . . .

THE FATE OF PACE

by Rev. C. M. Moorhead

Dear Sir: Tom Pace seems to think I am "all too defenseless." I am defenseless only to *his* way of thinking. Far from being defenseless I am still capable of putting up a pretty good scrap. So far there have been few who have been willing to enter the lists on the side of Christianity. Whether any of the rest of you are willing to admit it or not, I still think I have held up my end of things pretty well.

While visiting the Atlantic Coast in Virginia I noticed an interesting creature in the marshy sections of the shore. Natives called it the fiddler crab. One could quickly see why it was so named, for one claw was huge, a formidable looking thing, while the other claw was stunted and diminutive. The huge claw tended to pull the crab sideways so that it was inclined to travel in circles unless it scuttled sideways to offset the drag of the claw.

Some of the "thinkers" in the pages of SS remind me of the fiddler crab. Knowing only

[*Turn page*]

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one subject—science (I use the term in general)—they scuttle around in a circle trying to discredit religion because they can't put it in a test tube and hold it over a Bunsen burner; or when the acid of their skepticism is poured on it, and it doesn't turn blue, they say there is nothing to it. The strange thing about it all is, that while they don't know a thing about it, yet they try to swamp the rest of us with the profundity of their thoughts. I don't tell a nuclear physicist how to crack the atom, and by heck I'm not going to stand by and allow him to tell me I am cracked because I believe in God!

Most scientists will postulate a hypothesis for the unknown and work toward that hypothesis to see if it will stand the test; if it is correct. But let anyone postuate the hypothesis of the existence of God and the pseudo-atheist and pseudo-scientist can sneer at anyone being so naive. True science does not prove nor does it disprove the tenets of religion. All the arguments against it in SS have been those gleaned in some class room from some professor who has gained his information from some other class room professor. Their notes have passed from the notebooks of the one to the notebooks of the other without having passed thru the heads of any of them. A mouthing of a mass of parrot-like phrases. Not an original thought in the lot. Religion is something that can be experienced as well as talked about. Christianity is an experiential religion as well as a theoretical one. It is workable.

A *true* Christian is not hard to find. He is the kind of person that *any* community is glad to have and often he is a leader in that community. You pseudo-atheists who sneer at religion would no doubt be among the first to yell "ouch" if all ethics were ruled out of civilization. You may not believe it, but all codes of ethics have stemmed from some religion.

Is everyone still with me? In the Fall Issue 1954 of TWS I read a really sweet little story, entitled *Trade-In.* The last paragraph really had me intrigued. I read it several times. I laughed with fiendish glee. I drooled at the mouth. "The mallet crushed into his temple, his eyes crossed, and before them swam a million, brightly crimson stars—more than he could count in all eternity, but he began counting just the same." How droll! What a wonderful finish for Tom Pace!—*Box 171, Bettsville, Ohio.*

We're with you up to the point where you call down wrath on poor Tom, but we stop there—we'd hate to lose him as a letter-writer. Why not wish him only a stiff headache? For another view on religion, let's listen to . . .

READER FOR 29 YEARS

by Charles Athey

Dear Editor: After reading sf for twenty-nine years, I am, after due deliberation, writing a response to Kennedy's tirade in TEV with a tirade of my own: It is my contention that all religions are detrimental to the welfare of the human race.

I do not make any pretense to knowledge of the correctness of any religion, nor do I have any reason to suspect that any branch of any religion has the key to eternal life. I can only base my premise on the history of wars and persecutions.

The basic principle of Christianity, I believe, is the Golden Rule. The Bible also says, "Judge not, lest ye be judged". These two tenets were not new at the inception of the Christian faith and they are older now, but they convey no meaning to the denizens of the jungle of modern civilization. Each man, as he hugs his miseries to himself, is busily kicking at the groin of his neighbor with the brass-bound toes on his shoes of righteousness. His firm belief in his own ego is unshakeable and he is convinced that his own mean little soul will be the only one to attain paradise. If there is a God, and there may be, I feel sure that his reaction would be one of disgust.

The rationalizations of the person who prays for his safety in the midst of a holocaust are beyond my comprehension. Why should a supreme Being intercede on *his* behalf when allowing the original flame? The prayers of a mother for her sons safety in battle might well have been used to prevent the war that endangered him.

The priest, following a condemned man to the gallows, praying for the salvation of the murderer's soul after he had violated a prime law. If such prayers are efficacious the well known ten commandments can be flouted with impunity and the theory that religion is a deterrent to criminality is proven false without further ado.

The rigors of ascetism, as practiced by the religious devotee, are as much an expression of self indulgence as the devotee of carnalism on the other extreme. There is no difference between the religious fanactic and a drunkard or dope fiend. They are both seeking release from fear and responsibility and deadening their minds to the fact that man is an animal, as subject to death and dissolution as any beast of the field. The only immortality lies in the fruit of his loins and the law of the conservation of energy, whereby the components of his body are returned to the earth in the cycle of fertility. The superiority of man lies in the mind. The development of a true civilization comes with the realization that only thru the development of the mind can man attain a greater status.

What we need is education in the art of *living* instead of a dream of life after *death,* education to the fact that all persons are entities, to be respected as such, and that each entity is entitled to life and the perquisites thereof. We need education to the end of prolonging each life to the utmost, thereby prolonging one's own—education in the realization that only by aiding others in the search

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for living can one attain life for oneself.

This theory of education is in direct opposition to present curriculums where even the games are a method of educating the young minds to strive to exert their superiority over others, either physically or mentally, to express their ego to the extent of belittling others. Just as each man exerts his efforts to raise himself above others, so he allies himself with religious, political, business, or social groups, that in their turn, strive to force themselves to the top.

Since man has attained a proven place in the world and established himself as the king of the mammals he has no enemies except himself. It is now time for social engineering and education to replace the outworn superstitions of the past. Only by such changes can man avoid the threat of mass suicide. The mass hysterias of the present age are a direct result of unsocial living and thinking.—*1995 Dixie Highway, Hamilton, Ohio.*

I don't know how far Bettsville is from Hamilton, but if you see a minister with a gleam in his eye—watch out. Now for another letter on the . . .

UNTOUCHABLE SUBJECT

by F. W. Zwicky

Dear Editor: My compliments. Anyone with the editorial fortitude to publish letters on the untouchable subject of religion is mentally adult and does his readers the courtesy of assuming they are the same. I refer to the excellent letter from Lowell Kennedy in the Winter, 1955, issue of SS.

Mr. Kennedy still wabbles a little in his thinking, however. He says, "There is no validity in any (religion) except the one put forth in the Bible"—he believes. If he will incorporate the last two words into the statement he will get no argument from anyone.

[*Turn page*]

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 of Startling Stories, published quarterly at Kokomo, Ind., for October 1, 1954. 1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Better Publications, Inc., 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. Editor, Theron Raines, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. Managing editor, None. Business manager, Harry Slater, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. 2. The owner is: Better Publications, Inc., 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y., N. L. Pines, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. 3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner. Harry Slater, business manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1954. Max Ullenberg, Notary Public. (My commission expires March 30, 1956).

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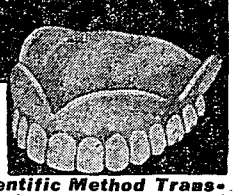

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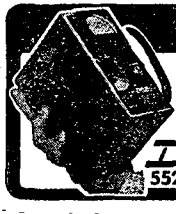

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But next he says, "Actually it's very difficult to prove." That is the epitome of understatement. Actually it's *impossible* to prove.

Personally, I don't feel that a supreme intelligence is absolutely necessary to the creation of the universe, the earth, and to the origin and evolution of life. Since neither of us has valid proof, I therefore don't quarrel with one who does think it necessary. One can keep on asking why to the point of absurdity. For example, the Newtonian laws of motion exist. Does it really matter why?

Also, I think most intelligent people do not condemn religion because of its misuse. Many good things are misused. I do think Mr. Kennedy has his values reversed as to science and religion. Science is merely the search for natural laws, regardless of their effect upon us. When they are discovered and proved to be true *without exception*, they are accepted as true, but even then, the real scientist keeps an open mind for a stray exception that might cast doubt upon his beliefs. Where in religion is *one* thing that is probably true every time without exception?

However, most of the fundamentals of religion (Christianity) do not disagree with scientific laws, so while we can't *prove* its teachings are true, neither can we prove they are false. For that reason, I can see no objection to a faith in something so fundamentally good. Nor can I see how religion (not its misuse) can be considered a "harmful social force." Further, I never have been able to understand why a study of science should have any effect on one's religious faith, one way or the other.

In closing, it appears that religion has done little to curb man's savagery except on an individual or strictly local scale, but it appears that if any force is to save us from ourselves, religion will have to be it, and my hearty blessings go with it.—*2244 S. 6th, Rockford, Illinois.*

That winds up the religious hassel for this time—on a note of compromise.

More Mail

Daryl Sharp, RCAF Station, Uplands, Ontario, Canada, announces to all fans in his area that there's a new s-f club—the Science Fiction Society of Carleton College (Ottawa.) New members welcome.

George Spencer, 8302 Donnybrook Lane, Chevy Chase 15, Md., says, "The Winter SS had the best cover and lead story yet."

Another reader who liked *The Snows of Ganymede* was Rich Santelli, 3525 S. 53 Avenue, Cicero 50, Illinois. He also says, "As for Mr. Young's *More Stately Mansions*, if you changed the locale to Mars and asked me who wrote it, I'd say that it was Ray Bradbury. It's that good . . . I'd love to say something nasty about the shorts, but I just can't this ish."

David Mason, 14 Jones St., NYC, objects to the Lowell Kennedy letters as an attack on Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam. He also puts in a plug for COUP, "fandom's most irritating magazine." The price is $.25 at the above address.

We've received an invitation which we're happy to pass on to our readers: The Fantasy Veterans Association requests the honor of your attendance at their Fifth Anniversary Convention, Sunday, April 17th, 1955, 1 P.M., Werdermann's Hall, Third Avenue and East 16th Street, New York City."

SFC Charles F. Neary, HQS Co QMSR, Ft. Lee, Va., is happy to be back in the States. We published his name in SS while he was in Korea, and he received copies of the magazine—plus many letters from the female sex. Peter J. Vorzimer, U. of Cal. at Santa Barbara, 104 Toyon Hall, Goleta, Calif., liked Poul Anderson's future history, the cartoons, and the letters. He says also, "I met Carol McKinney at the World Con and found she was far too sweet a girl to be attacked by something like Deeck. Of course I mean 'attacked' in the verbal sense. It's too bad that Gruesome (Wm. Deeck) couldn't be at the Con. Who knows? Those Con hotels are pretty high and . . ." The price of his fanmag ABstract is now $.25 per copy. Deeck (Wm.), Potomac Ave. (8400), Maryland (College Park), writes, calling us "old beer-gut," "well-fed ed," &c., &c. He's still on the T. P. Caravan kick, though.

Warren F. Link, 1123 Cumberland Road, Abington, Penn., likes the fact that our covers depict scenes from the inner fictional content.

Miss Marge Timko, 1040 Chandler Avenue, Akron 14, Ohio, would like to hear about any active s-f clubs that are in free flight over the atmosphere of the Planet Ohio: "Come hither, fellow ridge-runners & soup-bean snappers, dust the uranium off your new lemon-flavored helium rockets and let's do something about a real STARTLING—fen club or 'zine in our native state."

That's all for now. See you next time.

—*The Editor.*

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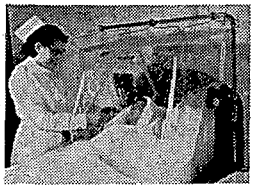

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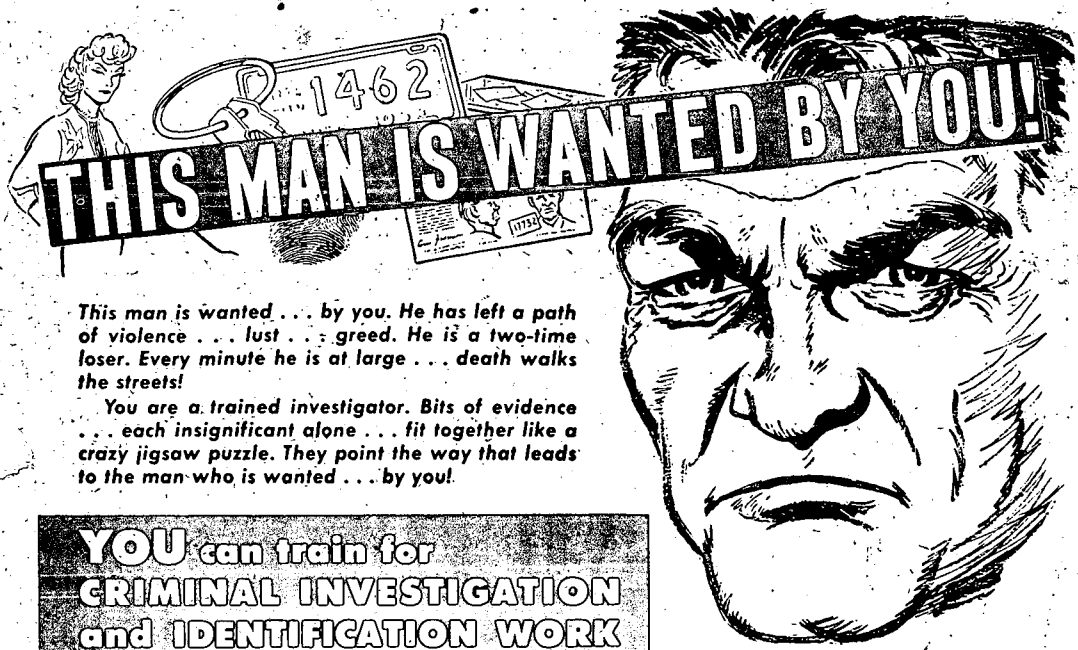

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